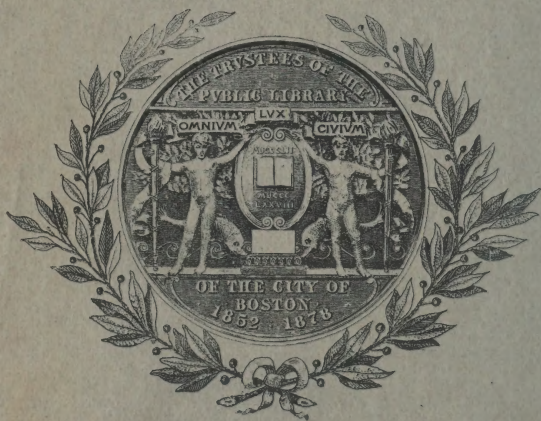




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BALFE:

His Life and Work.

BY

WM. ALEXANDER BARRETT.

WITH PORTRAIT OF BALFE AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.

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Let the breath of renown ever freshen and nourish
The laurel which o'er her dead favourite bends ;
O'er me wave the willow, and long may it flourish,
Bedew'd with the tears of wife, children, and friends.

THE HON. R. W. SPENCER.

London :

REMINGTON AND CO.,

NEW BOND STREET, W.

1882.

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TO BALFE'S BEST FRIEND,
THE BRITISH PUBLIC,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E .

IN the days when Opera was an infant institution, it was customary to set forth in the title of a book an explanation of its purpose, and sometimes the reason for its existence. There was then no need for a preface. In the present day epigrammatic titles are the fashion. If it were possible to get readers to understand the meaning proposed, authors would select the letters of the alphabet alone for the titles of their books. Their prefaces would probably increase in proportionate verbosity.

The title of the present book, "Balfe, his Life and Work," being short and terse, might justify the calling into existence of a long and rambling exordium. The author asks the reader "of his courtesy" to accept the intention for the execution, and to pardon him for omitting to follow the accepted custom, as he desires only to use these preliminary pages to offer his thanks to those who have made his labour light by sympathetic and friendly help.

To Sir Robert P. Stewart, Mus. Doc., Professor of Music in the University of Dublin; to Dr. John Dunne, of St. Patrick's; to Mr. Desmond Ryan, to Mr. James W. Davison, and to Mr. Thomas Chappell, he hereby tenders grateful recognition of much valuable help, without which this record would have been shorn of most of its interest from an historical point of view. The information they have generously given has made the task of tracing the remarkable career of Balfe as a man and as a musician easy as well as pleasant.

For kind permission to copy the portrait of Madame Grisi thanks are due to Mr. Mitchell.

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B A L F E .

CHAPTER I.

1800.

THE condition of musical art, like the position of musical professors in this country at the beginning of the present century was in no way hopeful. The best native musicians were compelled to struggle and to labour in the face of adversity and almost of contumely. "Fiddler's pay" was a proverb the application of which in those days was more personal, forcible, and pertinent than it is now. "Only a fiddler," was a contemptuous expression in common use among those who emulated the hollow refinement of Lord Chesterfield. Genius was existent, but it had no great market value. The ablest musicians were expected to perform tasks which the meanest practitioner in the art ought scarcely to have been called upon to do. The brightest and most talented musician of his day

Henry Rowley Bishop, was chiefly employed to furnish music to aid the effect of certain dramatic situations in the theatre. He wrote music for Melodramas but not a single Opera. His music was to be subordinate to the acting. Such, however, was the impression his beautiful melodies and his fanciful orchestration made upon the public mind, that the original condition of things became reversed, and several dramas for which he had been engaged to furnish "a few tunes" became attractive less for the acting or for the spectacle they may have afforded, than for his music, much of which lives to the present time, though the dramas themselves have completely perished. The success he achieved did not rouse men's minds to the importance of the musical art, nor did it suggest the development of native talent in this direction. The musician had no *status* in the world, no privileges of society. However great his abilities and how often soever their exercise was sought for, his personal character was estimated according to the accepted views concerning his class, and tasks derogatory to the dignity of art and distressing to the artist were

often imposed upon him. When he was suffered to appear in the saloons of the great and mighty, a silken rope was drawn across a portion of the room in which he was to perform, to mark the boundary of his situation, and the estimation in which he was held personally, and in the intervals of the exercise of his refining art, he was "thrust aside to herd with flunkies, who copying their betters, added to the humiliations already heaped upon him, by a supercilious contempt."

In public entertainments native music and musicians were treated with a like disregard. On the stage it was considered necessary to have music, more out of respect for traditional use than for any high value set upon its assistance. When a composer was required to furnish music to augment certain situations, the number of seconds he was to fill up was duly prescribed, and if the composer was able to overcome the scruples of his manager, and to gain indulgence for a song or other vocal piece which should occupy a little longer than the time originally set out, there was the chilling and terrible ordeal of public judgment to suffer. Mr. Planché in his *Recollections* speak-

ing of these things so late as the year 1823, says: "Ballads, duets, choruses, and glees, provided that they occupied no more than the fewest number of minutes possible, were all that the play-going public of the day would endure. A dramatic situation in music was 'Caviare to the General,' and inevitably received with cries of 'Cut it short!' from the gallery, and obstinate coughing and other significant signs of impatience from the pit."

It is not possible to believe that the public were good judges in the matter, and exhibited impatience not at the music as such, but because they had not been taught to believe in the importance of music as intensifying dramatic art. There were no English schools of music, no opportunities for acquiring improvement in the exercise or increasing the estimation of art available for the people. The nation had for a long period been engaged in undertakings which do not tend to the promotion of the peaceful arts. It had retained through all, its old love for music, but limited its expression to utterances of a robust character. The refinements of music were chiefly appreciated and cultivated by those who by circumstances were kept protected.

from the influences which swayed the less fortunate. The thoughts and actions of the people were moulded after a pattern set by passing events.

Poetry in the truest sense of the word was best understood when it was presented in a form suited to the demands of the time, and in a language that permitted of no ambiguity or misunderstanding. What was called "sentiment" supplied the place of deep reflective expression. An exaggerated idea of the so-called manly qualities checked, if it did not actually forbid the indulgence in the weakness of being moved by tenderness. The heart might be touched, but the tongue must not admit the influence.

On the stage where so many causes of excitement were sought for and encouraged, the additional claims of music, its power of stirring up the secret feelings of the soul and influencing men they knew not why, were freely acknowledged, but not wholly admitted.

The statement made by Mr. Planché and referred to above certainly tells the facts, but makes no attempt to account for them. The people were

ashamed to admit the sway of music at such times when they expected to be excited by other emotions. They did not dislike sweet sounds, because there are proofs of the enthusiasm with which many of the ballads and songs of the time were welcomed when they had the ring in them which was admitted to be true. One of these proofs may be found in the existence of the songs themselves in the present day. On the other hand, the advantage of a good introduction would not force favour. Numbers of ditties which are known to have been frequently sung, by the references to them in the newspapers, and by their constant appearance in collections of words of songs sung at Vauxhall and elsewhere, have perished. They ministered too slavishly to the estimate formed of existing taste, and as taste is ever changing, they became old-fashioned long before the ideas to which they conformed had passed out of the public mind.

Things destined to live must be contrived to be in seeming conformity to passing fancy, and yet calculated to elevate it. This is the secret of the effect of all works of genius, and this

was particularly the cause of the cumulating popularity of the music of Michael William Balfe, the subject of the present work.

To pursue the course of this prologue, and to show the condition of the musical inheritance Balfe was destined to augment and to improve, it is necessary to say a few words more upon the subject of music at the beginning of the present century in this kingdom.

The people had not wholly cleared their minds of prejudice against the foreigner, and it was only the enlightened few who knew the works of the great geniuses living and working abroad. Handel, for all that he had lived the greater part of his life in England, and had written and produced all his best works in this country, was little known to the masses. Haydn was alive, but "old and weak," Mozart had only been laid in his unknown pauper's grave some dozen years, but to the people of England all these great men were for the most part only names, if so much.

The best of the English musicians then living contented themselves with the simplest efforts. Horsley, Callcott, Webbe, Battishill, and others

confined their genius to the production of songs and glees. In this last-mentioned department, however, they left to posterity master works of a quality which have been imitated, but never surpassed, by their successors.

If it be true, as is often stated, that Ecclesiastical music is the inheritance of the preceding generation, the Cathedrals, Churches, and other "choirs and places where they sang," ought to have been rich. But like most legatees they were discontented with the old-fashioned forms of the things bequeathed to them, and cast them aside as lumber in favour of things newer and suited to the ephemeral character of modern taste.

English composers did not care to devote their time to the filling in of a gap caused by a long period of careless inattention and neglect, to the enrichment of an institution which exhibited no interest in, and offered no encouragement for, their productions. The gap was, however, lessened by the labours of those who, if they could not make, could meddle with. Adaptations from all sorts of foreign writers, from all sorts of works, secular or sacred originally, were fitted to

words from the Bible or the Prayer Book, or even from the edifying inspirations of Tate and Brady, and were highly appreciated by the authorities. The apathy of the clerical functionaries was for the most part compensated by the interest of their women-folk, to whose care church music was relegated. Church musicians in those days attached little importance to their offices. In a worthy following of the example shown by their rulers, the Singing-men held several appointments, and compliant Deans and Chapters arranged the hours of their services in their Churches to accommodate the members of their Choirs. Well-known as they were as Cathedral singers, they were better known as tavern vocalists, ever ready to assist the cause of good-fellowship by the excellence of their efforts. Music and conviviality went frequently hand in hand. The musicians suffered from the conviviality, and the conviviality damaged the character of music.

This one degrading influence of the age was felt by musicians as by other members of society. When several of the professors of music united to keep alive some of the best traditions of their

art, and formed clubs or associations for the practice of Madrigals, Glees, Catches, and even Songs, the dinner and the allowance of wine was the first consideration of the evening's entertainment. More than one of these associations still exist, but the opportunities for indulgence in the necessary luxuries of this sort of life are viewed now as of less importance than the more refined and refining pleasures of music.

The musicians of the past were wise in the foresight in these matters; they did not, could not, disregard the customs of the time, but their confidence in the elevating charm of their art was not ill-founded, as the present generation recognises with the pleasure which comes of possession. For all this, the condition of music was not hopeful. It was to a certain extent a monopoly. Its best efforts were reserved for the upper ranks of society, and exercised under restrictions which were irksome to the majority, and distinctly with a view to the preservation of its charms for the delectation of the favoured few.

When musicians themselves formed a society for the cultivation of their own musical knowledge

without the customary banquet, a society which they happily called the "Philharmonic," they followed the course which was nearest to their own experience, and made such conditions of membership as would have been instituted had things been reversed, and the amateurs had invited the musicians to join their ranks.

The general public, always known to be music-loving, were not considered in the arrangements. No one thought of educating the people by giving them the means of educating themselves. Even for those who intended to adopt music as a profession there was no institution in which they could be systematically taught.

Musicians lived a sort of moral hand-to-mouth existence, and picked up encouragement and recognition in the same way as they had for the most part picked up their education.

It was a dark hour for native art, and although a few stars shone faintly in the musical firmament, their light only served to show the intensity of the surrounding blackness.

It was the dark hour before the dawn. Music was soon to be recognised; its artists were to be

considered as worthy to be admitted into the highest social ranks. Few knew this, however, though many hoped for it. None imagined that the star which was to be the herald of the dawn was to be the son of a poor fiddler in the city of Dublin.

CHAPTER II.

1808—1823.

GENIUS is said to have no ancestors. The possessor of genius not infrequently inherits some portion of his peculiar gifts. In his predecessors these never arose beyond the dignity of talent; in himself they become intensified and developed into genius.

Michael William Balfe came of a family associated with the stage and with music as a profession through a long course of years. His grandfather was a member of the orchestra at Crow Street Theatre in Dublin, and there is a tradition—difficult now to verify—that his great-grandfather was a pupil of the famous Matthew Dubourg, and one of the members of the noble band who played in the two first performances of “The Messiah” in Dublin in 1742. Balfe’s father—born in 1783—was an excellent theoretical musician, and a very good violin-player. He married Kate Ryan, a lady remarkable for the beauty

and grace of her person, and the austerity of her religious observances. Michael William, their third child and only son, was born on the 15th May, 1808, while the family occupied a respectable house in a quiet thoroughfare, No. 10, Pitt Street, Dublin, part of a row of houses just newly built, and called after the name of the "heaven-born minister" then recently deceased.

Balfe's father was a Protestant, and his mother was a Catholic. In accordance with the custom observed with regard to "mixed marriages," as such unions were called, the male children were brought up in the religion of their father and the females in the faith of their mother. Michael William was baptized in the parish church of St. Ann, in Dawson Street, Dublin, and was educated in the belief taught by the Church into which he had been admitted. His sisters learned the creeds of the Church of Rome, and it is a somewhat singular fact that they, like all the women of the Balfe family, married Protestants. The males selected Catholics as their partners in life.

Not only was the moral training of the bright and happy child superintended by his father, but

when it was discovered that there were unmistakable signs of a predilection for music in the infant, he also imparted to him early lessons in the art in which he was destined to become famous throughout the world, and by the exercise of which he was to make his own name honourable, and to elevate the profession to which he belonged.

His father taught him the violin and the piano-forte, and the quickness with which he seized an idea—one of his most strongly marked characteristics as a man—was exhibited in his very infancy. So soon as he had mastered the use of the bow, and his pliant fingers could stop the strings of the tiny fiddle upon which he practised, he began to imitate the playing of the more prominent of the street performers, whose execution afforded him delight and his friends amusement.

About the year 1814 Logier gave some lectures in Dublin explanatory of his system of teaching music, and took some children who had never before known anything of music and demonstrated the value of his method upon them. He proved how readily the art could be acquired when taught properly, and many of the teachers of

music in Dublin began to work upon his plans. It is not known whether young Balfe was one of the "clever children" selected for the experiment, but it is certain that he was working hard at the rudiments of pianoforte-playing at the time.

There is a story told of him by some of his surviving relatives which sets the character of the young genius forcibly before the mind. He had recently heard an orchestral band perform Haydn's "Surprise Symphony," and his lively imagination exaggerated the crash which Haydn introduced upon the half-close of the first movement to make, as it is said, "the ladies jump." A simple arrangement of the theme was one of the pianoforte lessons he had to practise. His mother and sisters were engaged elsewhere in the house, when suddenly they heard a fearful crash, and as the mother thought the screams of her child. In terrified haste they rushed into the room in which he had been at work, expecting to find the place in ruins and the boy a corpse. The mother's fright yielded to surprise, her surprise to anger, as she saw the child dancing and crowing with delight. In order to make the "grand crash" at the proper

point of the music he had piled the fender and fire-irons upon a chair, and had fastened a cord to them all in such a manner as to make them fall with a clatter, and so realize Haydn's design most completely. /

It may have been in consequence of this or other like events that the elder Balfe recognised the necessity of confiding the musical education of his boy to other hands. His first engaged master was William O'Rourke, or, as he was afterwards called, Rooke, a clever musician, who did all that he could to develop the unquestionable musical talent of the boy. It is certain that this was a wise step, for the father, never very strong in health, could not but feel that he might be called away at any time, and his gifted child's talents never be properly cultivated. He had been compelled to remove to Wexford for the benefit of his health, but he brought the boy back to Dublin and placed him as a pupil with O'Rourke, under whose care he made rapid progress.

/He had received a great amount of encouragement from the leader of a regimental band whose name was Meadows. This worthy man

had noted the earnest attention with which the boy watched the performance of his band and followed it about, and he took the trouble to explain to him the construction and compass of the several instruments employed. In gratitude for his instructor, and as proof that it was not altogether thrown away, young Balfe composed a Polacca which he scored for the band. It was performed exactly as it was written, and so excellent, was it in melody and harmony, and so accurately arranged, that the men who played it could with difficulty be brought to believe that it was the unassisted work of a child not yet seven years old. The score of this Polacca exists to this day. O'Rourke brought the boy on rapidly in his work. In less than a year—in May, 1816—he made his first public appearance at the Royal Exchange as a solo-violinist, playing a concerto by Mayseder.

On the 20th June, 1817, young Balfe played with Mr. James Barton a “duo concertante” upon the occasion of Barton's benefit, and although there was no account of the performance in the papers on the following day, there was an advertisement inserted in “Saunders' News-letter” of

22nd June, 1817, by H. Willman (bugle player), of a concert he proposed to give, which contains these words—"after which (by most particular desire, and positively for that night only) that wonderful child Master Balfi, only seven years old, pupil of Mr. William O'Rourke, will perform a concerto on the violin in which he will introduce the popular air of the Minstrel Boy, and a Rondo composed expressly for this occasion by Mr. O'Rourke."

The age was not quite correctly given, but it may have been considered more attractive to the public. The skill of the boy would be considered to be more remarkable if he were stated to be younger than he actually was.

/ The delight with which the genius of the child was welcomed by an impressionable people may be well imagined. He was loaded with presents. Some of these were suited to his age, and others were offered which testified more conclusively to the goodwill rather than to the good taste of the donors./

The gift from Sir William Crampton, the father of his future son-in-law, of a chaise and a

pair of live goats, trained to draw and to be obedient to the rein, was one in which the child took great pride in. He drove it in triumph through the streets, and only relinquished it when it was found that he neglected his studies to indulge in an exercise which pleased him, and enabled him to offer to others a share in his pleasures.

He was kind-hearted and generous even in those early days. He was also just and fair and honest to a fault. Carried away by the success won in his childhood he sought to minister to the pleasures of the troops of small friends prosperity had brought around him. His pocket-money was either shared with them or else expended in those small luxuries dear to the juvenile taste. When money was for a time not to be commanded, his credit was good, and the expected small treats were generally provided.

After an absence of many years when he returned to Dublin, he was walking down the street in which his father died, Hamilton Row, the sight of the scene of former pleasures brought with it a present pain, for he saw through a certain shop window, the old woman who had

frequently trusted him in days gone by. The sight reminded him of the fact that he owed the old soul a few shillings he had forgotten to pay. He went in and said to the woman, "Do you remember a young vagabond called Balfe who went away many years ago in your debt?" "I remember young Balfe," the woman said, "he was not a vagabond, nor do I mind me that he owed me anything. If he did he was welcome to it, for he was a fine open-hearted, generous lad." "I am that young scamp," said Balfe, "and I have owed you that money all these years, and I've now come to pay it with interest." The old woman took the sovereign Balfe offered her, and said that "although she did not recognise her boyish customer in the smart-looking gentleman who stood before her, his liberal payment of an old and forgotten debt, was to her a proof that he could be no other than the happy, handsome, spirited boy she had known, grown into a pleasant-spoken kindly gentleman."

Although this story is in some sort a digression, its appearance in this place is justified by the fact

that it exhibits a phase of character, very necessary for the information of those who love to trace the growth of those qualities in the child which they admire in the man.

Reference has been made to the gifts offered to the child in recognition of his precocious talents. The manner in which he used these gifts exhibits his character in an interesting light. The story of the boat which one of his admirers caused to be built for him upon lines suitable to his age and weight, showed the pluck and strength of purpose which in after-life sustained him through many a severe trial. His father had taken lodgings at the village of Crumlin, a short distance from Dublin, and on one day when he expected his boy to breakfast was surprised and alarmed because he did not keep his appointment. An hour or so after the breakfast had been removed the boy appeared, bravely carrying his boat after him on the road. He had rowed himself along the canal, had lifted his craft over every lock, and now brought it to his father's house for safety, not caring to leave it where his eye could not keep watch over it. The energy thus displayed was

extended to his studies. After playing for Mr. James Barton he became his pupil, and what with the instructions of his father, O'Rourke, his additional master, and the friendly Meadows, he managed to make acquaintance with the characteristic qualities of all the instruments in use both in the Orchestra and in the Military Band. He was wonderfully quick in his studies, and like most quick children was wont to prefer a game of play to the steady exercise of acquiring musical knowledge. Soon after Mr. Barton began to give the boy lessons, his old master O'Rourke left Dublin, and the new master knowing perhaps something of the child's impulsive character, impressed upon his parents the necessity of assiduous practice. This the father ensured by locking the boy up in the parlour of the house he had removed to in Hamilton Row, No. 3. When the child sighing for liberty would perhaps pensively cease to "run his scales" and go through his exercises his father noting the silence, would strike the floor above, and the boy answering the signal, would resume his studies. He was with James Barton, as a pupil, two years, and was followed by

a boy, also bright and clever, R. M. Levey, whose friendship made at that time continued throughout life.

Young Balfe had now possessed so much skill that he was able to earn a little money by the exercise of his profession. He played solos at the public concerts in Dublin and elsewhere, and was distinguished not only for the facility of his execution but also for the grace and expression of his phrasing.

One day a stranger called at his mother's house and announced himself to be a friend of her uncle McNally, sent to inquire after his existing relations, with the intention of leaving to them the large fortune he had amassed. All who claimed kinship made themselves particularly agreeable to the ambassador, probably with the design of inducing him to carry a favourable report of their behaviour to the rich uncle.

James McNally was related to Leonard McNally, the author of the words of the song "The Lass of Richmond Hill." James started in life as a musician, and left the profession and went to the West Indies, where he acquired a large fortune.

He was related to Balfe on his mother's side. Leonard McNally was a member of the Irish bar, and wrote the libretto of an opera "Robin Hood" to which Shield set the greater part of the music. It was produced at Covent Garden Theatre on the 17th March, 1784, and met with much success. One of the songs, "As burns the charger" is still a favourite with bass vocalists.

Young Michael William alone unmoved by mercenary considerations, was the favourite of "Mr. McNally's friend." He listened with wonder to the stories told of the adventures in the solitary waste, but cared little for the gently insinuated tales of the wealth accumulated by so much hard work, and of the prospect that Mr. McNally might be induced to leave all to the clever little boy. "I don't care for his money, but if he is so lonely there in the plantations I should like to go and stay with him, and learn to shoot and hunt the wild creatures, and when we were tired of that, to come home and to cheer him up in the long evenings with a tune or two on my fiddle. It's so hard for a man to be away from all his friends and relations in a foreign land."

McNally, for he was his own ambassador, was touched, and when he returned to his home he made a request that the boy should be sent out to him that he might welcome him as his adopted son. By this time Balfe had determined to devote himself to the art he loved so earnestly, and he therefore declined the tempting offer. Had he decided to accept it, the event which occurred at that time would have changed his resolution. His father lay at the point of death.

CHAPTER III.

1823—1825.

WILLIAM BALFE was never a strong man, but neither his friends nor his relatives, least of all himself, had any idea that his end was so near. His mind was well balanced, and he could regard the approach of death with the calmness of a good conscience. He sent for his son and gave him advice as to the method he should pursue in his career through life. This counsel had double value to the boy, inasmuch as it came from the lips of one whom he had always tenderly loved, and although he was unable to realize the full force of the words at the time, a vague feeling of dread of he knew not what, sharpened his memory and impressed the scene upon his mind with vivid force.

/ When his father was dead, the circumstance acquired a new meaning. The boy remembering every word his parent had said, formed a resolu-

tion such as might have been expected from one who had already shown a marked firmness of character. While his father could work the family had lived comfortably, now he was gone their prospects were not encouraging. Only forty years old when he passed away, William Balfe had not been able to make much provision for the family, and when the small estate was realized, the prospect was one of sorrow and gloom. Our young hero, scarcely fifteen, determined to be no longer a burden upon his mother. He cast about in his mind for the means to support himself and also if possible to add a little to the straitened means of his mother and sisters. His father had not been laid in the grave for more than a few hours, and his excited imagination invested the house in which his first grief was experienced with indefinite terrors. He trembled to remain in a place where such a heavy grief had fallen on him, and nothing would induce him to enter the room in which the body had been laid. Years after, when he revisited Dublin, and went to see the house with his niece "Bonny Gonn," the old dread revived, and although he entered all the other rooms

he could not overcome the fear which fell upon him as he passed the door of that one room he dared not enter.

His soul as well as his body was wrapped in mourning for his deceased parent. He wandered in the twilight that evening to commune with his own thoughts away from the scenes which suggested only one painful train of reasoning.

He had a hope of probable success in his native Dublin, and might have earned a decent living by taking such work as would offer itself. But Dublin was familiarly associated with scenes and events that brought only saddened memories now to the orphan boy. If he had been permitted to accept his uncle McNally's offer, he might be rich, and could do something for his mother. Would he were away from Dublin. All the sights and sounds in the city brought only pain, the more keen in proportion as at one time they had been the source of pleasure.

Here was the theatre within whose walls he had been witness of, and had also ministered to the enjoyment of his fellow-citizens. On the walls were the bills announcing this night to be the last ap-

pearance of Miss Stephens and Mr. Charles Edward Horn after their twelve nights' engagement previous to their departure for England. By an impulse he cared not to control he determined to say farewell to the man who a few days before had heard him play, and had praised a song "Young Fanny, the beautiful maid," he had written before he was nine years old. The memory of kindness was dear to the wearied little heart at that moment. He might never see his friend again, and at the least he would seek the pleasure of saying farewell. He sent his name up, and was soon admitted to the presence of the singer, who welcomed him and spoke a few words of commiseration concerning his recent loss.

Yielding to an impulse similar to that which had induced him to enter the theatre, young Balfe asked Horn to take him with him to England on the morrow. He earnestly desired to try his fortune in London. His father's death had left his mother very poor, he had no wish to weaken her slender means. He was anxious to qualify himself to earn his own bread, and was willing to do anything which should further this project.

Such an appeal fell upon the ears of the listener with surprise, but it was favourably received. Moved by pity for his misfortunes, and by admiration for his genius, he comforted the boy by consenting to take him, provided that his mother would agree to the arrangement. The mother was at first loath to part with her child, but she felt pleased and flattered at the offer made. She foresaw in it, the opening of a career which might prove of the greatest benefit to him. So with many tears she agreed to let him go, and early the next morning gave up her boy, sorrowfully assenting to an action which made a wider void in her care-laden breast.

Two hours later the mother and child parted, each smothering their emotions, and hiding from each other the pangs which tore their hearts. With a forced gaiety the boy promised his mother to work hard and become a great man if industry could accomplish such a task. The mother proud of the fortitude of her child and echoing his hopeful predictions, left him after commending him to the care of the heavenly Father who is the protector of the orphan and the widow.

His arrangement with Horn was that for seven years he was to continue as his pupil, and to hand over all the money he earned, and to receive in return a series of lessons, and a certain percentage of the fees he gained. Young Balfe soon found that his master had exerted these conditions more as a proof of the earnestness of his intention, than from any expectation or desire of making a profit out of his genius. Horn's engagements became numerous, and his occupations absorbing, but still he kept his share of the bargain well and nobly. If he had no time to devote to the education of his young charge himself, he found the means of advancing his studies. Under his own direction Balfe learned to score for a band with facility and accuracy. From his father Karl Friedrich Horn, who was at that time organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, he acquired a familiarity with the subtleties of counterpoint and thorough-bass. He also learned to play the master works of John Sebastian Bach, of whose "Wohl-temperirte Clavier," Horn had in conjunction with the elder Samuel Wesley published an edition in London some dozen years before. Thus his education re-

ceived an additional scientific impulse. / Soon after Balfe arrived in London at the end of the month of January, 1823, he was offered an engagement, through Horn, to play at the Oratorio Concerts at Drury Lane Theatre. / Mori was the leader, Sir George Smart the conductor. / Though quite a boy he possessed a steadiness and gravity in his business far beyond his years. / As he was then, so he was all through life; full of gaiety and ever ready for fun, but when he had to work, his whole soul was absorbed. He was another being. He worked hard at the lessons set by Horn. He strove by all means to improve himself, even entering his name as a student at the recently founded Royal Academy of Music. / In the theatre he was punctual and obliging, and the amount of knowledge he displayed strengthened the good impression his reputation had made upon his brethren of the orchestra. His behaviour at his duties so far inspired confidence that he was appointed to play on alternate nights a violin solo, the famous Mori taking the other nights. Mori also occasionally resigned the leadership of the band to the boy, knowing that his lead would be loyally

followed, and that the boy's intelligence would not fail him in the right reading of the music. / Out of the theatre and free from his tasks he was as light-hearted as ever, but in the orchestra he was as steady as a rock. His attentiveness was a pattern to his elders, and the gaiety of his disposition their admiration and delight.

One evening towards the winter when his services were not required elsewhere, he went into the gallery of the Haymarket Theatre at which the comedy of "Paul Pry" produced 13th September, 1823, was then running prosperously, with Madame Vestris in the part of "Phœbe." His master's song "Cherry Ripe" was the attraction for him. To his astonishment he heard also his own ballad "Young Fanny" announced in the bills with now different words "The Lover's Mistake," by T. Haynes Bayly. Intoxicated with the applause with which the song was welcomed, he told the people who were sitting near him that he was the composer. To his indignation and chagrin he was called "lying young braggart" for his pains. He was mistaken in thinking that

what he knew to be the truth others would believe without evidence to support his statement.

The song became so popular that Willis the publisher, who had contented himself with presenting the composer with twenty copies, made a large sum of money out of it. The words were printed in every song-book published at the time, and the first number of the third volume of the famous series called the "Universal Songster" issued so late as 1826, was sent forth with the "Lover's Mistake," with an illustration by George Cruickshank. The song was probably given by Horn as a curiosity to Madame Vestris. Though written more than sixty years ago it is remarkable for that freshness of melody which always distinguished Balfe's compositions.

In after-years when his work had brought him fame and profit, it is said that he was wont to kiss the scores of his operas with all the affection that a father salutes his loved offspring. He was properly proud of his work, but he was never conceited. Perhaps the experience he had earned in the gallery of the Haymarket Theatre, which

must have fallen with burning bitterness upon a soul so sensitive as his, may have taught him a lesson the effects of which never left him. If any one had reason to be self-opiniated because of success it was our Balfe. His career was one of prosperity from the outset. But great men are generally modest, and Balfe was a great man.

The Oratorio Concerts at which Balfe played generally lasted through the season of Lent. Despite their title they did not necessarily consist of whole oratorios so much as of selections from such works, and of other items chosen to please the varied and improved taste of the public of the time. When the term of his first engagement expired, Balfe was invited to become a regular member of the orchestra of Drury Lane Theatre then under the direction of the famous Tom Cooke, an Irishman, a wit, and a very clever performer. His name is remembered among musicians by a number of amusing stories told of his readiness at repartee, his practical jokes, his kind heart, and great abilities. His glees, duets, and songs which have reached posterity prove the last fact conclusively. As a musician

his chief fault seems to have been the readiness with which he tampered with the master works of the great composers when he was called upon to place them on the stage. It was his misfortune to have had to do this in conformity with the fashion of the time. Respect to a composer's design was not always paid unless he had accommodated his work to popular taste. Rossini, Weber, Beethoven, Mozart, Handel and others were all "improved" by him, so that even when works under his direction were announced, written by either of those composers, the public was not sure, as he was wont to say, that they hadn't been "Cooked." The ignorance of the public and their indifference, together with the cupidity of the stage managers of the period justified to a certain extent the misuse of the talents of a truly fine musician.

Cooke was a master-conductor, who could play on every instrument in the orchestra. He performed solos on nine different instruments on the occasion of one of his Benefits. He was also a sharp and observant man of the world, and knew the depth and measure of the ability of every

player in his orchestra. He soon found the value of young Balfe's talents, and taking advantage of the boy's punctuality and attention to his work, occasionally absented himself from his post, leaving word for young Balfe to take his place as director. In those days the conductor directed with his bow, and enforced the emphasis of certain passages by a vigorous lead on his violin. The spectacle of a boy in a jacket and turn-down collar ruling with spirit and energy a body of musicians his superiors in age, whose brightening eyes and earnest attention spoke of the confidence in, and the admiration for, their young general must have been a remarkable one even in those days.

At the close of the season of Oratorio Concerts in 1824, the orchestra of Drury Lane was engaged for a series of performances at Vuxhall Gardens, then one of the most favoured places of resort out of the metropolis; the elder Mr. Gye then was lessee. Balfe was included in the list of the members of the band. Means of locomotion were scarce and expensive, and as the Gardens were kept open to a very late hour, which rendered it inconvenient, if not dangerous to return home to

London on foot through the streets, the members of the band were accustomed to hire lodgings close to their work for the time of their engagement. Balfe had neglected this duty until the last moment and then was sorely troubled to find accommodation. All the places were full, and at last he presented himself at a shabby-looking dwelling, the doubtful character of which was augmented in his mind by the strange hesitation of the mistress of the house. She had a room, but it would not be ready until to-morrow. Not liking the prospect of having to roam the streets all night, Balfe determined to take the lodging as it was, even if he was to be consigned to the haunted chamber, for such he believed was the character of the room that the confused landlady intended him to occupy. The fatigue he felt overcame all superstitious scruples, there were no associations in his mind connected with the place, and he dreaded nothing. He had a quiet conscience, and he felt he could sleep through thunder. He slept soundly. In the morning he found the room clean and tidy, and laughed at his own fears, and wondered at the strange behaviour of the woman of the house. In surveying

the room he opened a cupboard door and there saw the corpse of an old woman which had been hastily placed there. She had died the day previously, had been laid out upon the bed he had occupied, and so the cause of the uneasiness of the landlady when he insisted upon occupying the chamber was fully apparent. The shock he experienced revived the memory of a scene which was never to be blotted from his mind. Notwithstanding the fright he had experienced, he showed no sign of the effect of his adventure to his companions. Years after he was wont to tell the story as an instance of the old woman's eye to business, but he never afterwards slept in a strange room without examining every corner.

Balfé was a morally brave man, and could endure trials with a resolution only possessed by the firmest minds. He was not superstitious, but he shrank from anything that reminded him of the terrible grief he suffered when he lost his father. In company with Edward Fitzball, the dramatist and poet, he once paid a visit to Dr. Stavely King to consult him about the bronchial affection from which he suffered. There was a skeleton in the

surgery, and Fitzball, in a playful spirit, placed Balfe's hat upon the skull. No one laughed more heartily at the joke than Balfe himself, but when he was about to leave the house the memory of former shocks returned, and he gave the hat to his servant and went home in his cab bareheaded.

CHAPTER IV.

1825—1826.

It may appear strange to those who reflect upon the progress of the career of young Balfe, that he should have all the spare time he possessed, be still pursuing his studies in composition, and yet should have not given to the world any of the results of his labours. It never occurred to him to rush to the publishers with his compositions with that eager haste which is too often displayed now by those who, having received some half a dozen lessons in harmony, consider themselves qualified to shine in all branches of composition, from a double chant to a five-act opera. Balfe in his early years was as open as the day, and he believed all men to be as honest and as single-hearted as he was. He was astonished to find that others could not work with the same facility as himself, and it may be imagined that his guilelessness was soon discovered and taken advantage of.

A certain man who had a reputation as a popular

composer, but whose name Balfe would never disclose, sought out and cultivated the friendship of the clever youth, and strengthened his own reputation by claiming as his invention certain pieces of work which were done off-hand, at the request of his cunning entertainer, who professed astonishment at his facility and knowledge. Balfe never divined the motives of the man who reserved the written papers in memory of the achievements.

The confidence and innocence of the youth did not permit him to see the subtlety of the snare laid for him when his "kind friend" gave him ten pounds for composing the music to a set of words intended to form an opera, including the duty of scoring the whole for a full band. A part of the money so earned was transmitted to his mother, and part was spent in a boyish freak with a companion, George Graham. One scene of the freak consisted of a journey to Gravesend and Rochester on horseback, each calling the other for the nonce Lord William or Sir George, to the astonishment and admiration of innkeepers and ostlers. The harmless, light-hearted joke was often referred to as a pleasant memory in after-years.

The amount of money Balfe earned at this time was little more than was necessary for his own maintenance in an extravagant place like London. It was with sorrow he saw his legitimate expenses increase, and the prospect of being able to send some of his earnings to his mother more and more remote. A passage in one of his mother's letters suggested the thought that she might be in immediate need of help. With his usual readiness of resource he went at once to Mapleson, the copyist of the theatre at which he was engaged, and asked for work, which was given to him. He sat up night after night until it was finished, and had the consolation of feeling, and the sweet assurance of knowing, that he had made his mother happier by his labour.

/Time wore on, and Balfe, still under nominal articles to Horn, continued to work, and to study the several matters connected with his profession, as well as those things which were necessary in other branches. With his customary rapidity he became well acquainted with the French and Italian languages, and was learned in the literature of those tongues as well as his

own. His memory was prodigious. He was quick of acquiring knowledge, and retained all he learned. He was accustomed in the periods of recreation after business to imitate the famous players and singers of the day. Among other of his successful pieces of mimicry was that which reproduced his master in his favourite character of Caspar in "Der Freischütz." He was then seventeen, and his joking helped him to discover that he had a voice of baritone character, similar in power, though slightly different in character, to that of his master. After a short course of vocal training, the development of his voice was augmented by his musical knowledge ; he conceived the idea of adopting the lyric stage as a profession. His hopes were raised to a high pitch when ~~Mr. Crook~~, the lessee of the Norwich Theatre, engaged him to appear there as Caspar in Weber's opera, "Der Freischütz," then all the rage, even though it had been first presented to the public in the mutilated style then common with such things, and with the addition of certain songs not properly belonging to the opera. Balfe modelled his reading upon

that of his master, Horn, who had created the part in which he was to make his débüt. / His fun had led him to a serious step, but in spite of his knowledge and abilities he failed. Stage fright seized him, and paralyzed each effort, and the performance was made most lame and impotent by his nervousness. / Another terror arose. The business was brought to a conclusion by a "stampede," consequent upon a false alarm of fire, arising from a too realistic representation of the scene in the "Wolf's Glen." / He returned to London, humiliated but undaunted, and resumed his old place in the orchestra of Drury Lane Theatre.

His courteous manners, his good humour, and his willingness to exhibit his accomplishments, made him a welcome guest everywhere, and secured for him a large circle of friends. / Among these friends was Mr. Heath, a banker, who exercised all his influence in making the path of life as easy as he could for the young man whose talents he admired so greatly.

At one of these reunions Balfe met the Count Mazzara. The Count was a Roman

of great wealth, and had recently lost his only son, to whom Balfe bore so great a resemblance as to cause at their first meeting a most violent shock to the still grieving father. The gloom of his sadness was dispelled in a measure by the enjoyment he experienced in hearing Balfe play and sing, and having learned from the host that the young man was studying for the musical profession, he generously offered to furnish him with means to attain the end he had in view. Balfe found no difficulty in getting free from the few engagements he had yet to fulfil, and speedily prepared himself to depart with his patron for Italy. The burning hope of his life had been that he might some day or another visit Italy for the purposes of study. That which at one time seemed to be so far out of reach, was now placed within grasp under circumstances of the most romantic character. On their way to Rome they passed through Paris, and Balfe had the opportunity of seeing and hearing all that was being done in what was then considered the central missionary station of art.

Here he was introduced by the Count Mazzara

to the veteran Cherubini, then in the sixty-sixth year of his age, holding the post of Director of the Royal Conservatoire of Music.

Balfe had heard in London many stories about the rude behaviour of the old Italian to young aspirants for musical honours, and it was therefore with no little trepidation that in reply to the demand—for so it appeared to him to be—to produce some of his compositions, that Balfe exhibited only a few exercises. He had not prepared the customary work which every young composer has in his portfolio, the recognition of whose merits is confined to a very limited area. He had only his studies in counterpoint and a few songs, and one or two overtures scored for a band, intended chiefly for the eyes of his teachers, Karl Friedrich and Charles Edward Horn.

These were pure and accurate in style, and without being pedantic were dignified and graceful. His melodies also possessed a charm which appealed directly to the heart of the Italian maestro. He then heard him play both upon the pianoforte and violin, and was delighted to find that the young man was equally happy in his power of

reading at sight, not merely playing the notes accurately, but also of divining the expression suitable to the music.

Cherubini welcomed the young musician with enthusiasm, and so far departed from his customary treatment of budding genius as to invite him to make his stay in Paris in order that he might superintend his musical studies. The Count Mazzara was willing for Balfe to decide to accept or decline the valuable offer on his own responsibility, expressing his readiness to help him with his purse to follow the course which Cherubini suggested. Balfe's heart was set on Italy, and while promising to ask the counsel and advice at any time he might need it which the old man proffered, he left Paris for Italy, to seek admission into the ranks of the musicians whose works were holding the public mind in willing captivity. He also hoped to be able to develop his voice and method by such instruction as could be obtained only in "the land of the sonnet and the song." In due time they arrived in Rome, after having passed through all the chief cities of the South, and visited every possible place of interest. Balfe's

artistic inclination enabled him to appreciate to the utmost the architectural beauties, the picturesque scenery, and the noble works of art, full of intrinsic and historical value, on their progress, his inclinations being guided into a right channel by the extensive and sympathetic knowledge of the Count, his cicerone.

His emotions upon reaching Rome were such as might be expected to be experienced by one so impressionable. The gloominess of the twilight hour invested the most ordinary buildings with an aspect of romance that did not fail to make itself felt upon the silent wondering youth. When the carriage had passed through the gates of the Mazzara Palace he awoke to the fact that he had entered upon a career which was to be in every respect different to his previous mode of life. His first thought was of his mother whom he had left in her far-off humble dwelling. While he was still thinking of her the Count led him by the arm through the dimly lighted hall, up a wide staircase, and then into a saloon which seemed to be lighted with great brilliancy in comparison with the feeble rays through which he had just passed.

There he saw in the softly lighted saloon, two ladies, one of whom for the moment he thought was the mother whose image was present in his mind's eye.

The Countess Mazzara was deeply moved at the living image of her lost son, and bursting into tears embraced young Balfe with the fondness of a parent. *the countess*

In this luxurious home Balfe lived for many months, only occasionally writing to his friends to inform them that he was yet alive. He was never fond of letter-writing. He did not neglect his studies, but assiduously worked at composition, under Ferdinando Paer, but he did not prosecute his work so vigorously as he would have done had he been spurred by the thorn of necessity. He occupied his leisure time in the composition of an opera "Otello," the book being the same as that used by Rossini, to ease his conscience for indulgence in undesirable idleness. / At times he fretted at his inactivity, and longed for work in which his independent spirit might find its truest utterances. As he had no thought of being anything else to his kind

friends than a welcome guest, he took advantage of the departure of the Count Mazzara for England at the beginning of the year 1826, to ask to be permitted to continue the musical training which had been so pleasantly suspended for a time. Balfe did not wish to return to England with the Count, and at his suggestion followed the Maestro Federici with whom he had been studying, as well as with Paer, a part of his time in Rome in a somewhat desultory fashion, to Milan, the city he proposed to make his future home.

It was a painful separation, but it was necessary. Had he yielded to the promptings of the idle side of his nature he might have lived in comfortable obscurity for the remainder of his life. He loved his adopted mother much, he loved his own mother more, he loved his art best. He had promised his mother to work, and to return to her a famous man, if industry and perseverance could make him such. The time was passing rapidly on, and he had as yet done nothing. All the fame he had earned had been awarded to him ere he left his Irish home. Up to a certain time he had been

working hard to improve his knowledge and accomplishments. His hand had been laid upon the plough, and he had wearied before the furrow was completed. He had not been true to his word, he had not been altogether idle, but he had not used his advantages properly. Henceforth he would work. From this time forward he would strive to realize his promise to his mother. He therefore accepted Count Mazzara's offer, and followed Federici to Milan to work and redeem the time he had scattered, but he hoped had not wholly lost.

CHAPTER V.

1826—1827.

THE Count Mazzara had generously placed a sum of money to the credit of young Balfe with his agent at Milan, and had so far shown a continued interest in his *protégé* as to introduce him to several people of position there. Taking an affectionate leave of him he departed, and Balfe realised the fact that the serious business of life was to begin. *Here*

In Milan therefore he resumed in earnest those studies which had been for a while suspended during his sojourn at the Villa Mazzara. He had just completed his eighteenth year, and his voice was more formed and flexible. His hope of becoming a vocalist was based upon better ground than it had been when he made his debut at Norwich, and he worked hard until as usual he had learned as much as his master could teach him. All that he looked for now was a favourable opportunity to appear upon the stage and commence a career

which had so much charm. He felt that all he needed was experience. This he hoped to obtain when once he was admitted to the ranks of operatic artists. His musical qualifications were such as gave him a great advantage over many who were occupying the position he sought for. He could read at sight any music placed before him, whether it was for the voice, the pianoforte, or the violin. This was a power not possessed by one in ten in those days. The *répertoire* of an operatic vocalist was only added to after much labour and frequent repetitions. In every one of the Italian towns, where there was an opera house and a troupe of singers, was to be found an old musician whose business it was to teach singers their parts, by constantly and persistently drumming them into their ears. Balfe's knowledge of music would save him the trial and expense of all this drudgery, and he could dispense with the aid of the *répétiteur*.

Federici tried all he knew to induce Glossop the manager of the theatre at Milan to give Balfe an engagement as the composer. He could not succeed in making the impresario believe in the talent

of the young man. He had heard him play, he had heard him sing, he had seen the compositions which Federici proudly showed as the work of his young pupil. They were all very well no doubt, but Balfe had not written for the stage, and Glossop being only an impresario, had no power of forming a judgment of the talents of any one who had not been submitted to a public trial, and moreover he was an Englishman, and whatever his talents might be, he belonged to a country, in whose artistic productions Glossop had no faith, for all that he belonged to it himself.

Glossop had two theatres under his control, La Scala in Milan, and San Carlo in Naples, the most important lyric temples in Italy. Notwithstanding the fact that he was an Englishman, and had married an Englishwoman, Miss Fearon, a most accomplished singer of whose talents he thought so much that he engaged her for his theatre at Naples, in the place of the great Madame Fodor, who had gone to Germany, at a salary of thirty thousand francs for the operatic year, still he could not be induced to believe that any other of his

compatriots possessed sufficient talent for his purposes.

He was kind and hospitable to Balfe, as he felt himself bound to be to one who came to him recommended by so valuable a friend and so powerful a man as the Count Mazzara, but he was English.

Federici had caused some of Balfe's compositions to be performed at a concert of the Conservatoire. To this concert Glossop was persuaded to go, and the music he then heard impressed him favourably. He might not be able to find anything for Balfe to do as a singer, but an opportunity might present itself for him to allow him to try his hand at composition. This opportunity was soon found. All Europe was then fascinated with the adventures of a French sailor "La Perouse," who had been shipwrecked on a savage island and had lived with the natives for some years before he was rescued. His experiences were made into novels, dramas, operas, and ballets. The story admitted of a large amount of barbaric display, such as Meyerbeer found so effective for his opera "L'Africaine." Glossop had with the assistance of his scene

painter and property-man Barrymore, also an Englishman, concocted a ballet upon the all-absorbing subject, and as they relied upon the effect to be produced by the scenery and groupings, he conceived it to be a small matter by whom the music was written. He therefore commissioned Balfe to furnish the necessary score. It was required in haste of course, but Balfe set to work with an energy and determination, aided by a genial appreciation of what was required for the evolutions of the dancers, that at the first rehearsal everything was ready, and so happily did the music suit the situations that scarcely an alteration was required.

The enthusiasm inside the theatre at the success of the young Irishman, was communicated to the outside world, and to Glossop's astonishment the music made as great an effect upon the public as the spectacle which was of the most gorgeous type. The Overture was encored, a March of the tribes was highly spoken of, the principal dances, and an *Intermezzo* descriptive of storm and shipwreck provoked the highest enthusiasm.

Glossop was delighted, and being convinced by

a process of reasoning which a theatrical manager knows how to follow, promised to find an opening for the young composer as a singer as soon as possible. Balfe still looked forward to attaining a position as a singer, rather than as a composer. He continued his studies with Federici, and with the Filippo Galli for whom Rossini had written the part of Assur in *Semiramide*. This experienced artist having heard Balfe, had taken him as a pupil for dramatic singing, and upon his report Glossop had made the promised engagement. This was to commence in the following spring, now but a few months off, and Balfe's heart beat high with hopes of such success as he felt sure earnestness and industry would bring.

Before the spring returned Glossop had resigned the directorship of the theatre La Scala at Milan, in order to give his undivided attention to that at Naples, and Balfe's hopes were once more dashed to the ground. It was unfortunate that Glossop should not have been enabled by his own experience to prove that it was quite possible for good musical talent to be possessed by a native of

that country which had produced good stage managers.

Balfe now felt the world was before him, and to preserve his independence it was necessary that he should exert himself in the direction towards which his artistic sympathies led him. The success of the ballet "La Perouse," suggested no thought to him of following his bent as a composer.

In the beginning of the year 1827, he returned to Paris, intending to stay a few days only before returning home. He had not seen his mother for a long time, and his heart began to yearn for the solace he would be certain to find in her kindly greetings, through all his disappointments. To his mother he would go. His pride would not permit him to revisit Rome, and be once more the welcome dependant of his kind friends and patrons the Mazzaras. He would go home. At the worst he would ask his old friend Tom Cooke to find him a stool in the Drury Lane orchestra, and he would bear the disappointment he had had to suffer with the best grace possible. Fate seemed to be against his even becoming a singer, while

his prospects as a composer were not brilliant so long as there remained the difficulty of persuading any impresario to entrust him with a *libretto*. When he found himself in Paris his first thought was to present himself to Cherubini. The old man received him very kindly and encouraged him by referring to the success his music to "La Perouse" had won, the news of which had been conveyed to him from Italy. He questioned Balfe about the work he had been doing, and won from him a recital of his plans and desires, and also heard him express his disappointment at the failure of his hopes. Cherubini showed his latest composition, a setting of the hymn "O Salutaris," for three voices, written for the celebration of Boieldieu's marriage, and set out in score which Balfe, walking to the pianoforte, read off at sight, to the satisfaction of the author, who then asked him to sing something that he might judge of the progress he had made. At the conclusion Cherubini said "You ought not to go to London if you wish to see the fulfilment of your desires. You will be lost there. Remain in Paris a few days until we can see what can be done to assure your debüt at

the Italian Opera.” After a moment’s thought he said, “Come dine with me to-morrow here, if you can. I will ask Rossini, will introduce you to him, and he shall tell me what he thinks about your abilities, that you may hear. He is, of all men the one who will most readily appreciate your talents, and will forward your best interests.”

Rossini at that time was Director or Inspecteur-Général du Chant de France, not Director of the Italian Opera as Balfe thought, but still his word was powerful in a place like Paris, and independently of the fact of his official position, Balfe longed to meet a man whose works he admired so greatly and whose name was a tower of strength in every opera house in Europe—a man who was the musical idol of the day.

Punctual to a moment Balfe presented himself at the official apartments of Cherubini in the Rue Poissonnière, and was welcomed by his host, and introduced to M. Gallois and one or two other friends who were present. In due time Rossini appeared, accompanied by his wife, the beautiful Madame Colbran, one of the greatest singers of her time, and for whom Rossini had written some

of his best parts. She had retired from the operatic stage, but occasionally her beautiful voice, Mezzo-soprano in range, Contralto in quality, was heard at the private reunions of her friends.

It was a great event in the life of Balfe to meet the husband and wife each so famous. It was with immeasurable pride that he returned the greeting of Rossini, and accepted his congratulations upon the success of "*La Perouse*," concerning which his friend and Balfe's master, Filippo Galli, had already written. Balfe was therefore not wholly a stranger to the great Rossini.

After dinner, Balfe was invited to sing. Cherubini chose some duets written by his illustrious guest, and Madame Rossini joined her voice with that of the aspirant for fame, Rossini accompanying, and Cherubini listening with critical admiration.

It was a proud moment in the young man's life. In after-years he was wont to say that had nature endowed him with the power of representing scenes and incidents pictorially, the one picture he would spend his best energies upon would have been the scene in the saloon of the apartments in the Rue Poissonnière.

Rossini was charmed with the sweetness and flexibility of Balfe's voice, and above all with the artistic spirit and intelligence of his rendering. When in the course of the evening Balfe had gathered together some of his old saucy spirit, and sat to the piano and accompanied himself in the song, "Largo al factotum," from "Il Barbiere," Rossini was delighted. At the same time he told Balfe that he was sorry he had heard him perform the task, "inasmuch as," said the composer, good-humouredly, "until this time, I had imagined that no one in the world could do that but myself."

CHAPTER VI.

1827—1829.

IN obedience to the request which Rossini had made the night before, Balfe called upon the great master the next day. He was ushered into the quiet, luxurious room in which the composer was said to work—a room filled with knick-knacks of great artistic worth and association. By the window was a handsome lectern on which was opened a full score. On the wall above the writing table was a splendid portrait of Mozart, whose works Rossini venerated, and whose genius was summed up by him in the inscription, set under the portrait, “Maestro dei Maestri.”

Balfe had scarcely time to note any other of the interesting articles in the room, for Rossini entered. He seemed to be greatly desirous of serving Balfe. He promised to recommend him to the Direction of the Italian Opera for an engagement on condition that he would place himself under Bordogni for twelve months for the purpose of

study. Balfe thought this a hard condition, but kept his thoughts to himself and agreed to the proposal.

Rossini had a double motive in making the proposition, one portion of which he disclosed in such a manner as to make Balfe believe it to be the whole. He told him that he wished him to succeed Pellegrini, who was then advancing in years, and gradually losing his voice, and to take the whole range of the characters in which the great baritone had made himself famous.

The twin motive was that Rossini guessed from the years of young Balfe that his voice was not fully matured, and required time and judicious treatment to develop its now only promising powers.

Balfe accepted the offer without hesitation, and thanking Rossini, who had shown so real an interest in his welfare, hastened to Cherubini to tell him the result of the interview. On his way to the Conservatoire, Balfe began to think that he had but very little money left, and pondered in his mind as to how and where he was to find the funds to pay for Bordogni's lessons and

his own maintenance. Before he had solved the difficulty he was in Cherubini's room, waiting for the appearance of the maestro.

His ever-retentive memory enabled him to repeat word for word all that Rossini had said to him. To the expressions of his gratitude Balfe added those of his hopes and fears. As the thought of his conference with himself flashed across his mind, the qualifying "but" rose to his lips.

"But what?" said Cherubini.

"I cannot live in Paris or pay for Bordogni's lessons, for I have no money," explained Balfe.

"Be easy," added Cherubini, "all that is provided for. My friend M. Gallois, whom you met here last night, has expressed himself willing to be your friend also. He has desired me to say that if Rossini's report of you was favourable, and that if it was necessary for you to remain in Paris to study, that he should be happy to place ten thousand francs at your disposal to make the way pleasant for you."

The heart of the young singer literally leaped for joy; the tears came into his eyes at this unexpected stroke of fortune.

The old man heard the few words of thankfulness which expressed whole sentences of feeling with a grim smile as he said—

“But”—

“But what, maestro?” in turn said Balfe.

“There is a condition which I make on my own responsibility,” said Cherubini.

“Name it,” said Balfe, “and if it is within my reach to accomplish I will make the attempt.”

“It is this,” said Cherubini, trying to look severe, “that you come to me during the time that you are in Paris, and let us read together.”

Balfe accepted this offer with delight, and Cherubini was pleased at the opportunity of keeping near to him the young man whose frank and genial disposition had so charmed him at the first interview, when he played from memory to the silent old Italian many of the pieces he had studied with Horn—fugues by Bach, choruses of Handel, and arrangements of overtures by Cherubini himself.

Balfe's work with Bordogni prospered. / The flexibility and extensive compass of the voice of the pupil charmed the master. / He wrote for him

a series of exercises which formed the nucleus of that famous course of *solfeggi* upon which Bordogni's artistic reputation was established and extended.

So great progress was effected, that before twelve months had passed Balfe made his appearance at the Théâtre des Italiens as Figaro in Rossini's "Il Barbiere." Madame Sontag was the Romia; Signor Graziani, Dr. Bartolo; M. Levasseur, Basilio; Signor Bordogni, Balfe's master, was the Almaviva.

The proof that this performance was successful in the most gratifying form may be found in the fact that the opera, with the same cast, was repeated nine times, and what is more to the purpose, Balfe was engaged by Laurent, then manager of the theatre, for three years.

This good news was brought to our happy baritone by Rossini.

"You have done well, but you must continue to work. Work, work, and yet work, and you will become famous—must become so—by your singing and your compositions here and throughout the Continent—perhaps also in your own country."

The young artist was full of pride at this encouragement, and read with pleasure the note of the terms Laurent offered—15,000 francs for the first year, 20,000 for the second, and 25,000 for the third; not a bad beginning for a young man not yet twenty years of age.

In the course of the engagement he sang the principal baritone part in all the favourite and popular operas then known. His chief triumphs were in Mozart's "Don Giovanni," the principal part in which opera it is said that he played *con amore*, and sang Mozart's music with a grace and charm of expression which could only follow in the wake of a sincere appreciation of the genius of the composer. He also sang in "La Gazza Ladra," in "L'inganno felice," and in "Cenerentola." In this last-named work he was associated with Madame Malibran for the first time, and made artistic acquaintance with a singer who was to add to her own and to Balfe's reputation by her performance in an opera not yet dreamed of.

Balfe continued to compose studies and exercises with Cherubini, in which all the subtleties of counterpoint and canonic contrivance were

mastered by him with the like facility he had ever shown in pouring forth melody, and with the rapidity with which he had written the score which earned him his first ten pounds. He seemed to have no care for the value of this work other than that which it brought him as an aid to the interpretation of the several parts he was called upon to sing according to his engagement.

He had no thought of becoming a composer.

His mind was set upon being a great singer, and his only regret was that he had not had the opportunity of creating any new part. Before his engagement commenced Rossini had produced "Moïse" at the Academy of Music, and while it continued he was working at the last and greatest of his operas, "William Tell," which was produced in August, 1829, at which time Balfe had entered on a new phase in his existence. Meantime, Rossini had noted the power Balfe possessed as a composer, and only waited an opportunity to do something to augment the fame he had gained as a vocalist by bringing his inventive faculties into exercise.

Rossini had said over and over again that when

a man has written many operas he begins to be a little tired. He does not exhibit the same eagerness for work as he did when starting upon his career.

This he repeated when Laurent asked him to furnish some additional concerted music for Zingarelli's "Romeo and Juliet," which he was about to produce for the sake of introducing Madame Malibran as Romeo.

The time was too short to make an appeal to the old maestro, Zingarelli, who was then in his seventy-sixth year, living in poverty and obscurity in Naples, and moreover he had ceased to write for the stage, and was devoting his spare hours to the collection and collation of his Sacred compositions.

It was therefore decided to ask some one on the spot. Rossini recommended Balfe for the work, who, after a little hesitation, agreed to undertake it.

He carefully studied the style of Zingarelli's music, which was written some thirty years before, and so happily did he catch the spirit of the worthy old master, and so ingeniously did he infuse his own tuneful soul into the work, that the effect was as though Zingarelli had been endowed with a new life and novel ideas.

The power of imitation which in time gone by had revealed to him the knowledge that he was gifted with a voice, now helped him to measure his capacities as a composer. The ballet music for "La Perouse" was dance music, which he modestly said "any one might have written," which is true if that any one had been Balfe, but this was a different affair. The overture, the two scenas for Madame Malibran and Mdlle. Blasis, respectively as Romeo and Guilietta, and the two spirited and dramatic choruses, were fully admired. The *primo baritono* now became anxious to earn the laurel crown of the composer.

Once more his friend Rossini came to help his desire. At his suggestion Laurent gave him a libretto founded upon the story of "Atala," by Châteaubriand, the French Byron as he has been called.

With the eagerness of an ardent lover Balfe set to work at his libretto, and in an incredibly short time worked out the whole *scenario* and completed three acts.

To do the best in his power to secure success for the performance he had written the chief parts,

according to his instructions, for Malibran, Alexis Dupont, Levasseur, and Adolph Nourrit, who created many of the best parts in Rossini's later operas, as well as those of Auber, Halévy, and Meyerbeer, and ended a brilliant career by committing suicide in a fit of insanity out of jealousy for Duprez, then rising into fame. Balfe worked so hard and closely to complete his opera before the conclusion of his engagement as a vocalist, that his health gave way, and his doctor—the famous Forsate—ordered immediate rest, cessation from work, and a sojourn to Italy. It was the first manifestation of the disease which was to carry him off some thirty years later. Disappointed, and disheartened almost, at the interruption of what seemed to be the opening of a new life, Balfe prepared to obey the request urged by his medical adviser. To mitigate the disappointment as far as possible, M. Gallois arranged a morning performance at his house of those portions of the opera which were already completed, and invited a number of the most distinguished members of Parisian society—musical, dramatic, and artistic—to hear the music.

The applause and approval bestowed upon the work was most encouraging. The artists for whom the parts were designed were enthusiastic concerning the share assigned to them, and Balfe started with a light heart for his retreat in Italy, already seeing in fancy the brilliant success which everyone prophesied would be gained by the work when completed.

His hopes were never realized. The opera was completed, and the remainder of the work was considered to be superior to that which had called forth the praise of the experts. Balfe had been sensible enough to perceive the necessity of bestowing more thought and labour upon the uncompleted portions in order to avoid the possibility of an unfavourable verdict from those whose judgment had encouraged him to go on.

He proposed to visit Milan and one or two other places in Italy before he returned to Paris with his score at the appointed time. In order not to encumber himself with needless luggage he left his opera, and several of his smaller scores, including the canons, fugues, and pieces in counterpoint of many species, single and double, which

formed the exercises he had prepared for Cherubini during his stay in Paris, safely locked in a stout wooden chest. This he carried with him wherever he went, and when he reached Bologna he left it in the care of the Marquis Sampieri, who was a great amateur and admirer of his talent.

He went to Milan to present the letters he had received from his friend Rossini; among others one to the Count San Antonio, afterwards the Duke of Canizzaro. Through the influence of this nobleman he obtained an engagement as *primo baritono* at the opera of Palermo, which was at that time under the direction of the Count Sommatino.

Having some time to spare, he could make his journey by easy stages, and visit his early patron the Count Mazzara, who was now returned to Rome. On the point of starting from Milan, he received a letter from the Marquis Sampieri, with whom he had become acquainted in Paris, pressing him to stay with him at Bologna on his way to Sicily. To Bologna he went, strengthened by rest, and happy in the thought of renewing and cementing a pleasant acquaintance with an agree-

able amateur musician. The Marquis met him on the road, gave him a Southern welcome, and delighted at the prospect of being able to justify the terms of praise in which he had spoken of Balfe to his friends, carried him off to the palace of the Prince Bacchiocchi, the husband of the sister of the great Napoleon, to be present at the first of many *fêtes* he was to take part in while in that neighbourhood—a ball given in honour of the birthday of the Princess.

One of the guests of the evening was Guilia Grisi, then in the eighteenth year of her age. She had already made her debüt at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna as Emma in Rossini's "*Zelmira*," and was within a few days to commence the engagement for the carnival season which proved the outset of her brilliant career.

The young baritone and the young soprano sang solos and duets together, delighting and astonishing all to such an extent that while they sang dancing was suspended, and the ball rooms were deserted for the concert room. The effect of the singing of the two young, handsome, gifted, and enthusiastic artists, attracted towards each other

by a power they neither could define, may be imagined by those who love to dwell upon such scenes.

The fascinations of Bologna were so great, the charms of the society so absorbing, that Balfe forgot both gratitude and duty.

He did not go to Rome to see his friends the Mazzaras; neither did he go to Palermo in time to fulfil his engagement at the Opera.

He waited to celebrate the birthday of the Marquis Sampieri, for which occasion he had written a cantata with solos for Grisi and Signori Tadolini and Pedrazza. The composer accompanied, and the chorus was formed by the ladies and gentlemen of the place.

This work was considered so clever and inspired that the Societa Filarmonica di Bologna made the author a honorary associate, and in compliment to his entertainer, as well as a recognition of his own social qualities, the exclusive Casino dei Nobili opened its doors to admit the young Irishman to the privileges of a life membership. All this time he ought to have been at Palermo.

CHAPTER VII.

1830—1832.

ACCORDING to the terms of his engagement he should have presented himself at the theatre in Palermo at the end of the year 1829. That time had arrived, and he was still enchained at Bologna.

He was fully aware of the consequences of his delay, but when he explained his position to his friend the Count Sampieri, he obtained, through the Duke of Canizzaro, a letter of introduction to the Princess Cataldo, who was living at Palermo, and possessed great influence in society.

With all the speed possible he departed, after having taken leave of his many friends, and arrived in Palermo in due course. He went straight to the Palace Cataldo and presented his letter. The kind-hearted Princess at once set matters smooth by inviting the director, the Count Sommatino, to meet the errant baritone at her hospitable table.

He made his debüt on the 1st of January, 1830, in the part of Valdeburgho in "La Straniera" by Bellini.

It was the birthday of the King of Naples, and the Viceroy attended in state. The house was crowded, and Balfe, not knowing the etiquette on such occasions, was astonished to find the Southern audience as cold as Icelanders. No applause was permitted when the Court was present except that which was directed by the representative of the State. Fearful lest he should have been thought to be wanting in his efforts to please, Balfe threw his whole soul into the Aria in the second act, and so moved the whole audience that they unanimously murmured the approval they were not permitted otherwise to express. The Viceroy gave the signal for a repetition, and thus encouraged, the whole house burst into a roar of approval.

If the manager had had any latent fear or doubt that his *primo baritono* had delayed keeping his engagement from incapacity, and a fear of presenting himself before a critical audience, that doubt and fear were dispelled. He had secured a prize. The house was filled night after night until

the opera had been repeated seventy times—a course of repetition which brought nearer the beginning of the Lenten season the close of Balfe's engagement.

“*La Straniera*” ceased to be strange, and would have been performed for the whole period of Balfe's stay had not the chorus struck for an increase of pay. Sommatino was unwilling to comply with their demands, and longed for an opportunity to dispense with their services. According to his contract he must produce opera. Had it not been so he would have arranged a series of concerts, to be supported by his principal artists. There were few operas available of sufficient interest, without requiring a chorus, that would bring the public to the theatre, and keep them there when brought.

Balfe had grown attached to Sommatino during the course of his engagement. The memory also of his kindness in not clapping him into prison when he arrived at Palermo, as he had the power to do, also lived green in Balfe's mind. With his customary readiness he offered to write a work

that might serve the purpose required, if a suitable *libretto* could be concocted.

This was done. Balfe gave the poet of the theatre a copy of a French vaudeville he had brought with him, entitled “*Les Rivaux d’eux Mêmes*,” and this was made into an opera, with title “*I Rivali di se Stessi*.”

While the work was being written—twenty days was the time allowed—Cimarosa’s “*I Matrimonio Segreto*,” Rossini’s “*L’Inganno Felice*,” in which he had made a success in Paris, and Mozart’s “*Così fan tutte*” occupied the stage. “*I Rivali*” had no part for Balfe; he generously omitted himself from the cast in favour of others. Mdlle. Liparini and Signori Boccacini and Scalesi sang in the opera, which brought the season to a satisfactory end, without the public in any way missing the services of the insubordinate chorus.

Balfe, in the list he made of his operas, and the dates of their production, gives the year 1829 as the period when “*I Rivali*” was written. This must be a slip of the pen, for that year was spent by him partly in Paris, partly in Milan, and partly in attractive Bologna.

It is possible that counting the year by the commencement of the engagement, he may have unintentionally misled the reader.

In Italy the chief engagement of the year is called the Carnival engagement. This is usually for about seventy days, terminating with Shrove Tuesday, and as that date is variable, for it depends upon Easter, the commencement of the season occupies part of the last month of the preceding year. It is then called the Carnival of 1829-30, or so on, for brevity 1829. So it must have been in the present instance.

It has been already shown that he did not begin his engagement in Palermo until the first day of the year 1830; the event which called for the production of the new opera without chorus did not occur until near the end of the Carnival season, and therefore the year of its birth was 1830.

Balfe made a similar error in recording the date of the production of the "Siege of Rochelle," which was in the year 1835. This he had entered on his list as 1836, a year too late. The lesser work had been set down as having been done a

year too soon ; a compensation in some sort without a balance was thus effected.

After leaving Palermo Balfe still thought of going back to Rome, and once more was prevented by the offer of a small engagement at Piacenza, which he accepted, and hastened northwards. He desired to renew the pleasant hours he had spent in Bologna, but the chief attraction was elsewhere.

After a short rest of a few weeks, he went to Bergamo to arrange about an engagement for the Carnival season of 1830-31. He did not sing at Bergamo, but he made the acquaintance of Mdlle. Lina Roser, who afterwards became his wife, and to whose wise counsels and careful forethought he was to owe his eminence.

Mdlle. Roser, a lady by birth, and a member of a distinguished Hungarian family, was at that time engaged to appear as prima donna at the Carcano Theatre at Milan, in company with the great Pasta, Elisa Orlandi, Eugénie Martinet, and other ladies, Rubini, Mariani, and Galli being the leading male singers. One of the works intended to be pro-

duced during this season was "La Somnambula," of Bellini, and the composer was anxious to give the part of Amina to the young Hungarian lady, who by her personal beauty, her rich and full voice, similar in quality to that of Catalani, her great talent for acting, and power of expression, seemed to be in every way fitted for the realization of the part.*

Her knowledge of Italian at that time was too limited to permit of her making the trial without risk. She sang the music superbly, but by the advice of her instructor, the Cavallero Micheroux—who also was the vocal master of Pasta,—she forbore to undertake the part, and it was assigned to Pasta, with what result all the world knows when it was produced on the 6th of March, 1831.

It was this characteristic self-denial which not only ennobled her, but was also destined to consolidate the greatness of her future husband.

Meantime Balfe had to go to Pavia. He was all unconscious of the blessings that were in

*"Belle comme la jour, douée d'un voix dont l'ampleur, la richesse et la sonorité ne pouvaient connaître de rivales, comédienne de la tête aux pieds."

store for him. His dream of happiness was apparently not to be realised, the horizon of bliss was clouded because the friends of the lady with whom he had fallen violently in love had determined to prove, not for the first time, that the course of true love never did run smooth.

Happily he was no repining lover, and did not relax his endeavours to fulfil his duty, but worked steadily on, with a dawning perception of the importance of careful exertions to secure the object he had in view.

The "quiet confidence" which was his strength had stood him in good stead on more than one memorable occasion. In Pavia it was to be the foundation of a development of power in a new direction.

He never asserted himself, but was always ready to undertake work which should help others out of difficulties. In Milan he had aided Glossop with a bright and successful work, the ballet "La Perouse." In Palermo he had saved the manager from a premature collapse by his opera, "I Rivali." In Pavia he was to help the manager again by

undertaking to discharge a difficult duty in an emergency for which he had made no provision.

Rossini's opera, "Mosé in Egitto," was in rehearsal, and Rolla, the conductor, who was old in years and older in prejudices, found the music far too great a task than he cared to proceed with. He could not satisfy the singers as to their ideas of the reading of the music, and he did not care to make the effort. The manager was in despair, for the work had been announced, and expectation was raised to a high pitch. He entreated, he implored, in the interests of his artists, who were wearied of the obstinate incompetent. Rolla was inflexible; he would not yield. He was primo violino and leader; the thing must be done *his way*. ~~This passage must be altered, that expunged, until the score was as nearly assimilated to the "big guitar" pattern that he had been accustomed to.~~ Rossini, in his opinion, had become eccentric and exacting in his later compositions. All must be altered if *he* conducted.

Balfe, who had heard the work in Paris, had a full impression of the pace of the several movements, and of the effect of the instrumentation.

At last he was appealed to, and modestly stated his views.

The violin players failed to render one phrase as neatly as was necessary. Balfe insisted upon its repetition until they had mastered it to his satisfaction. Rolla interrupted the practice by calling out—

“You had better cut it out; it is no violin passage at all.”

“Not a violin passage!” exclaimed Balfe. “Rossini surely knew how to write for the instrument upon which he was proficient.”

“Very well, since you are so confident, perhaps you will play for me, and I will sing for you,” said Rolla, hoping to humiliate Balfe, and not knowing all his capabilities.

Balfe took a violin from the hands of one of the members of the band, who were grinning in expectation of a lame performance, and played the passage with power, expression, and accuracy. The band, chorus, and principals burst into such a torrent of applause that it swept poor Rolla out of the theatre, which he never entered again. Balfe could not foresee the effect of the mortification he

had caused, and regretted the Irish impetuosity which had made him give pain to a brother artist, however irritating he had been.

The situation had been forced upon him, and he felt bound to follow it to the end, whatever that end was.

“Mosé” was successful, and once more the season passed tranquilly. Before the conclusion Balfe was invited to write another opera. Circumstances delayed the production until the day when he was to finish his engagement and take his parting benefit. The opera, “Un Avvertimento di Gelosi,” was successfully received, and was further made memorable by the fact that in this Ronconi made his second appearance upon the operatic stage, and laid the foundation of a fame which was soon to become European.

Balfe was now a recognised vocalist, whose services had been secured for the best theatres in Italy. He had proved that he was a competent conductor, and that he was quick, fertile in his ideas, and original in his inspirations as a composer.

Fresh from his triumphs at Pavia, Balfe paid a

visit to Milan, and the Cornara Opera House being still open, he was one among the most enthusiastic of the audience on certain evenings. He was invited to pay a visit to the manager of La Scala, and in the interval between the receipt of the invitation and the time for keeping the appointment he built all sorts of castles in the air, the foundation of all being his appointment at the theatre, which of course he imagined was the object of the invitation. He was disappointed in one respect, but gratified in another. It was as a composer, and not as a singer, that he was to be admitted to La Scala. This was, if possible, more honourable a post than his imagination pictured. La Scala in Milan is the north star in the operatic firmament round which all the constellations move. To secure success there is to attract the attention of the whole musical world.

The new opera he was asked to write was called "Enrico Quarto al Passo del Marno." The freshness of the melodies, the vocal character of the phrases, the brilliancy of the orchestration, and the basis of scientific knowledge displayed throughout, enchanted critics, hearers, and singers alike.

The opera was successful, and for a long time retained a place in the *répertoires* of the best operatic theatres in Italy. By this Balfe obtained ultimate fame, but little present profit.

Composers in those days were not able to obtain large sums for their efforts. Rossini was never well paid for the best of his works. Donizetti wrote whole operas for sums only a little more than a modern writer obtains for a single song. The friends of Bellini urged him to demand higher terms for his opera, "*La Somnambula*," than had been paid before for a like work, and yet he was paid only 10,000 francs. As times went Balfe was compelled to be content with 200—about eight pounds—for "*Enrico Quarto*."

Madame Malibran, whom Balfe had known in Paris, was present at the performance of this opera. She was the guest of the governor, at whose soirées she had been singing during the few days of her sojourn in Milan. She had recently left Paris, and was on her way to Rome, where she was engaged to sing at the Théâtre Valle.

She was delighted to meet Balfe, and in expressing her admiration for his work, told him that she

should not be satisfied until she had sung in an opera of his in London.

Balfe seemed to have forgotten all about London, and to fear that his hope of returning to the metropolis of Great Britain was too far for realization. His countrymen may have heard of his fame abroad, and he might become known among them as a vocalist if any opportunity presented itself which would bear him to London in its fulfilment. But as a composer he appeared to think his chance was doubtful because none were so prejudiced against English composers so much as the English themselves.

Malibran ever earnest and sincere on behalf of those she took an interest in, prevailed upon the manager to include Balfe in the company of vocalists of "La Scala" and helped him to win bright honour by the manner in which she performed with him on the stage. She also organized a tour in which he was engaged, which was both successful and remunerative. The tour was arranged by Signor Puzzi who at the conclusion induced Balfe to accompany him to London to try

his fortune among his countrymen as a leading baritone singer.

With hearts full of high anticipations, the young baritone and his charming wife started for England. He burned for the time when he could show his countrymen that he had not been idle during his long absence from his native land. He could show his score of "La Perouse," his "Atila," and he could for his own delight retrace the stages by which he had arrived at the eminence they represented by means of his studies with Horn, and Cherubini. To Count Sampieri he sent asking to have the box in which they were treasured despatched by Vetturina. The Count promptly and courteously replied, saying that he duly caused them to be delivered as directed. The box never arrived, and though diligent search and outcry was made, no vestige of its contents has been discovered to the present day.

CHAPTER VIII.

1833—1835.

THE first few months of the year in which Balfe returned to London were bridged over by the few engagements which were offered to him. He appeared at the Ancient Concerts, then a most exclusive institution chiefly supported by the aristocracy, and justifying its title by the preservation and occasional production of the fossil remains of antique art. He also sang at other concerts in the season of 1833-4. The date is memorable in the annals of the music. The second visit of Mendelssohn to London was made on the 27th April in that year, and his Italian Symphony was first heard at a concert of the Philharmonic Society.

In 1834 Balfe brought letters from Grisi and Malibran to Mr. Arnold of the English Opera House—now the Lyceum Theatre—and was commissioned by him to write a work with an English libretto for the opening of the theatre which he

had caused to be built. The author of the libretto was Mr. Edward Fitzball, a dramatic writer of great power and fancy, and above all, one who was by no means deficient in the qualities looked for in a true poet. The subject suggested by Balfe himself, was the story upon which Ricci's "La Chiara de Rosenberg" was founded. Fitzball has left it on record, that by accident he had read the book, two or three days before, but did not seem to think the story sufficiently dramatic. Still he kept his opinion to himself and set to work vigorously to write the book. He was ardent and enthusiastic, and finding both those qualities and others in the young genius whose reputation had preceded him from the Continent, there was no lack of will on the part of the authors. Balfe laboured with a courage and speed equal to that of his literary *collaborateur* who had finished the first act in two days. The score was given out, as it was written. The parts were distributed, the rehearsals proceeded with, and all who heard the music were fascinated with its charm. The greatest success was prophesied for the work. All at once Balfe

learned to his dismay, that the manager did not feel inclined to expend much money in the production. The building of the theatre and other expenses had reduced the treasury, and it was thought that the public would come to the theatre for the novelty's sake, and if Balfe's work was what he knew it to be, it would attract audiences for itself whatever was the manner of the mounting. Balfe thought differently, and though it was almost a death-blow to his hopes, decided not to risk the production of his opera unless it could be placed on the stage in a manner in which he thought worthy. So the English opera which was written for the English Opera House was not given there. Loder's "Nourjahad" written the year before, was substituted. Before the negotiations were broken off, and while the rehearsals were still proceeding, Balfe was surprised to receive a visit from his old leader and fellow-countryman Tom Cooke, who was yet at his post at Drury Lane Theatre. The lessee of the national home of the drama at that time was Alfred Bunn, the poet Bunn, as he was afterwards styled.

Tom Cooke told Balfe, in confidence of course, that he had been sent secretly to find out what the music was like. Bunn's curiosity was awakened by the glowing account he had heard from Mapleson, the copyist to the theatre. The hitch in the arrangements had probably also reached his ears, and with his usual business-like astuteness he had thought to enlist the services of Balfe, "this Signor Balfi of whom every-one was talking," in time to come, if not in the present.

Cooke's reply was characteristic.

"Well, Mr. Bunn, if you could only get this 'Siege,' it would be a sort of wheel-within-wheel arrangement. You would have the Siege on the stage, and the walls of old Drury would be besieged in turn." Bunn did secure the opera, and produced it on the 29th October, 1835. He agreed to pay Balfe five pounds each night it was performed, and was pleased at having made so easy a bargain. The composer naturally felt proud of the advance in his position since he last entered the theatre.

Mr. Henry Phillips in his *Musical and Personal Recollections* does not tell the whole truth concerning this matter when he states that Mr. Bunn

accepted the opera on his recommendation. He tells several anecdotes about our young composer, the gist of which is intended to reflect creditably on himself, and therefore in his generosity he has not always been accurate. He is just to Balfe when he says that “‘The Siege of Rochelle’ was full of life, vigour, and originality, abounded in melody, and was arranged most dramatically,” but he knew not the work nor the author until he met him on the stage, during the rehearsals at Drury Lane.

Fitzball, the author of the book, records his impressions of the days previous to the production. “Many and delightful were the rehearsals of this opera; they flow back to me in sweet melodies of youthful feelings and early dramatic friends—Henry Phillips, Seguin, Wilson, Giubelli (I never knew how to spell his name), Paul Bedford, Hallam, Miss Shirreff—charming Miss Shirreff, and pretty Fanny Healey.

“It was a glorious night, the first night of ‘The Siege of Rochelle’—one to wish your whole life long the first night of a new play or a new opera. The cram there was the fashion, the delicious music, the enthusiastic applause, the

double *encores*, never had I witnessed anything like it/ 'Vive le Roy,' 'Lo, the early beam of morning,' and 'When I beheld the anchor weighed,' 'The Cottage near Rochelle,' were especial marks of approbation, and had an immense sale at the publishers', then Addison and Beale, in Regent Street. The applause was so unanimous—so *really applause*, for those who understand it, can always tell the real approval from the *claqueur*—no knocking behind slips by box-keepers. Under any circumstances a proceeding 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance.' / So carried away were even persons of the highest consequence by the enthusiasm created by this beautiful music (thought by many still to be Balfe's best composition), that people bent over, and nearly threw themselves from the side boxes, next the orchestra, to congratulate and shake hands with the young composer. They crowned him with a wreath of flowers, and I question, amid all the numerous and brilliant successes of this great artist, if he ever felt such a delighted heart as on the first night of 'The Siege of Rochelle.' "

Professor Macfarren in his biographical notice in the "Imperial Dictionary," says with the success of this work, "Balfe was thus established as a popular composer. 'My Cottage near Rochelle' was built in the streets of London; 'Vive le Roi' was sung as a benediction to the Sailor King, William the Fourth."

The opera had a great run, and was played together with a translation of "La Juive," by Planché, in which Miss Ellen Tree (afterwards Mrs. Charles Kean) and Mr. Vandenhoff sustained the chief parts.

As Henry Phillips affirms the "success was great, and yielded a great harvest both to the composer and the treasury."

Queen Adelaide, the consort of William the Fourth, was delighted with the music, and accepted the dedication of the work when it was published; she also commanded a performance of some of the chief *morceaux* of this opera at one of the Court concerts. She caused—as a surprise to Balfe—a set of silver bells to be made to accompany the quartett "Lo, the early beam of morn-

ing," for which she always expressed the greatest partiality.

When our beloved Queen Victoria paid her first state visit to the theatre, soon after her accession to the throne, the "Siege of Rochelle" was performed by *special desire*. The interest which she then exhibited in the work of the foremost among native composers, increased with increasing years, and continued after the hand "whose skilful pen could reproduce the burning thoughts of a busy brain," was still and cold. A portrait of the Queen represented in the pride of youth and beauty, standing in her box at Drury Lane, on this occasion, was one of the most successful artistic efforts of the famous Chalon. It was engraved on steel by Walker.

Balfe's name was now foremost in the minds of the musical public. His melodies were on every lip. His fame was secured, and he had confidence in his own resources to believe that he would be enabled by his subsequent productions to justify the good opinion everywhere now expressed of his abilities. He could return to his native land with pride at having so far fulfilled his own

prophecy concerning himself. But there was yet much more to be done. / Commissions for work poured in on all sides. / He who a short time ago had felt grieved at the first repulse of fortune at denying him a hearing, longed for greater power to do all that was asked of him.

The pleasant and sweet cup of prosperity was not without a dash of bitterness and gall. Hear Mr. Bunn. "It became the fashion," he writes, "as invariably it does in this country, to abuse a man the moment his abilities begin to denote a mental superiority over those he is surrounded by. In France, Italy, and Germany every species of encouragement is held out to a rising genius—in England he is subject to every possible detraction, and the moment Balfe's talent burst upon the town, it was assailed by the most unwarrantable attacks. Persons calling themselves musical judges were loud in their assertions that every note of 'The Siege of Rochelle' was stolen from Ricci's Opera of 'Chiara di Rosenberg;' and it was not until this last-named composition was produced by the Italian Buffo Company, under the spirited direction of Mr. Mitchell, that these self-consti-

tuted judges tardily and reluctantly admitted that there were not half a dozen bars in the two operas that bore the slightest resemblance to each other."

As Mr. Bunn describes the event, it was proved that hearing was believing. The old proverb that "seeing is believing" did not prove true. The two scores were on view on the counters of the music-publishers for weeks, and advertisements were inserted in the newspapers announcing that fact. Many of those who had written disparagingly of the work came to see Ricci's book as it stood side by side with Balfe's. Some came voluntarily, others by special invitation. But they were all slow to be convinced by the evidence of their eyesight. Both works were printed in musical characters, and it was not a *sine qua non* of a musical critic's business in those days, that he should understand the alphabet of the subject upon which he was called upon to write learned and eloquent disquisitions.

English musicians were at that time struggling for encouragement. John Barnett's "Mountain Sylph" had been produced, and had made itself deservedly popular. Edward Loder had written

his "Nourjahad" abounding with melody and musical contrivance. Each of these operas reproduced the style which Sir Henry Bishop had made popular. In the first "The Magic-wove Scarf" was an earnest and successful attempt to introduce the dramatic element into an opera in a more serious style than had been hitherto attempted by English composers. Balfe's music went further than either composer had as yet ventured in the region of dramatic expression. All the concerted pieces in "The Siege of Rochelle" seem to grow out of the situations and exactly to express them, as well as to intensify them. The orchestra had work to do which required attention and could not be "simplified" or "guessed at." The Overture actually contained phrases of canonic imitation, and was written in that modification of Sonata-form which had already begun to make itself distinguished in the Overture and was counted as a development. In every place there was a respect for the demands of form. The melodies were such as the listener delighted in, and the singer loved to execute. The harmonies were rich and new.

In short Balfe had shown in his "Siege of

Rochelle" that he had made a distinct artistic advance, and had set a pattern which might be expanded and extended by all who had the power and the will to advance the claims of English musical practical science. The public hailed his efforts with delight. Musicians trembled at his innovations and daring ideas, and tried to make themselves believe that they were all wrong. They copied his patterns however, and flourished on the new knowledge they had thus helped themselves to.

He was called the English Rossini, as a few years before Sir Henry Bishop had been distinguished by the title of the English Mozart.

Each deserved the compliment thus paid to his genius, and Balfe in humble imitation of the great Maestro after whom he was named, determined like him to close his ears to envious disparagement, to employ the gifts he possessed honestly and fearlessly, to work steadily and use his abilities in the most earnest way, tempered by the science he possessed, but careful not to obtrude his learning so as to become pedantic and to lose sight of the heavenly gift of melody with which he had been so richly endowed.

CHAPTER IX.

1836—1838.

THE facility with which Balfe was wont to produce his work was astonishing. His readiness and willingness to accommodate himself to circumstances, was one of the causes of his great popularity with all those with whom he had to deal. / Like the “Merry Zingara,” in one of his own songs he had “a smile for all.”

He could show by example how an artist should sing or play a passage concerning the execution of which there may have arisen a difficulty. He could group a chorus in effective attitudes, he could arrange the colours of the costumes so as to produce the like harmonious results to the eye as his music did to the ear. He could make peace between the stage manager and the carpenters who could not or would not shift a scene so as to prevent the appearance of delay, and all with that extraordinary tact that he seemed to have made

the persons chiefly concerned, the originators of the thing he desired to see effected.

At the final rehearsal of "The Siege of Rochelle" he observed that the concluding symphony of one of the numbers gave the carpenters scarcely time enough to shift the scene without an ugly pause. He could not stop the rehearsal, but he made a mental note of the matter, and told the master carpenter that he would provide a remedy for the defect. He left the theatre without having done what he proposed. In reviewing his work the man remembered the promise, and finding that the copyist had not been supplied with the supplementary piece of music, he rushed off to Balfe's house and found him at dinner.

"A messenger from the theatre," was sufficient excuse for a few moments' absence from the room. The sixteen bars were written and scored, and Balfe took his place once more at his table.

"What did the man want?" was the inquiry.

"He wanted sixteen bars to eke out that carpenters' scene."

"Let him wait, and you can write them after dinner."

“They are done, and I daresay that Mapleson has the parts copied from the score by this time.”

In the evening everything passed off smoothly, and Bunn not knowing how the matter had been arranged, told the master carpenter that “he was certain that those lazy fools could shift the scene in time to the music if they only tried.”

The success of “The Siege of Rochelle” made Balfe the lion of the season. His name and his melodies were in the mouths of every one. He was engaged at concerts, and at private entertainments of the nobility, and reaped a golden harvest. Some of his early supporters continued their friendship for him throughout life. The Duke of Beaufort was pleased to show his appreciation of Balfe in many ways. He invited him frequently to dinner, and did much to make his genius known, and to show his estimation of his personal character. The Duke of Devonshire—to whom the opera “Falstaff” was to be dedicated—was also kind to the rising genius. On one occasion when Balfe accompanied the singers at an Italian concert which the Duke gave, he was presented with a

rouleau of twenty-five sovereigns, his customary fee being ten.

The memory of a former windfall revived the desire for a like adventurous exercise, and he started with a friend to Richmond where they spent a happy day and a portion of the money so unexpectedly earned.

On his return home he found another piece of good fortune awaiting him, a packet from Bunn enclosing a libretto he had written. This he commissioned Balfe to set for Malibran whom he had engaged at the unusually large sum of £120 per night. There was also a letter from Malibran herself, announcing her arrival, and her desire that he should redeem his promise and write an opera for her during her engagement at Drury Lane, which she had come to London to fulfil. The opera was completed and put in rehearsal. The title selected was "The Maid of Artois." The subject had been used before, but the treatment was all new. The principal parts were represented by Madame Malibran, Isoline; Mr. Templeton, Jules de Montagnon; Signor Guibilei, Sans Regret; Henry Phillips, the Marquis; Mr. Seguin,

Synnelet. Bunn paid Balfe, as before, five guineas a night for the acting right.

In this opera occurs the famous air "The light of other days," in the symphonies of which Balfe introduced the cornet-à-pistons for the first time into the orchestra, under the name of "cornetta." Malibran's singing and acting was marvellous in its effects; consequently her success as Isoline was astonishing, the opera was most attractive and profitable. The receipts for the first sixteen nights were £5,690, an astonishing sum, but only a little less than the profit realized by the publisher for one of the songs, "The light of other days."

The "Rondo finale," "With rapture dwelling," which became so well known on the Continent as to receive the title of "Balfe's air," was written as an afterthought. Balfe had great knowledge and experience of stage effect, and as the rehearsals proceeded, he became more and more convinced that the "number" written originally for the Finale would fail and bring the opera to a tame end. Malibran was convinced that the contrary would be the case. "You will be wicked



MALIBRAN.

to cut it out," she said to the composer. "It is the most brilliant piece in the opera." Balfe determined to write a new air. With his body fatigued, and his mind still active, he fell asleep when he reached home, and waking suddenly after midnight, the theme presented itself almost unbidden, certainly unwooed. It was written down and scored before he went to rest. Early in the morning he went to the lodgings of the prima donna, she was still in bed. Her husband De Beriot was practising with his violin in the drawing-room. With the enthusiasm which sympathetic musicians feel for each other's works, De Beriot played the voice part and Balfe accompanied upon the piano-forte. Madame's bedchamber was too far distant to enable her to hear and judge of the change. She was unwilling to be disturbed. She was content with the finale as it existed. At De Beriot's suggestion, however, they carried the small piano into her room, and played the new finale over. At first annoyed, then amused at the behaviour of the "two maniacs," she heard, listlessly, then eagerly, then finally embraced Balfe, and promised to learn the scena in time to

sing it at the final rehearsal that morning, which she did, and roused the band, the chorus, her fellow-artists, and others who were present, into a state of excitement by her quickness and daring, which was expressed by a spontaneous burst of applause, a foreshadowing of what occurred at night. The first performance was given on the 27th of May, 1836, seven months after the production of "The Siege of Rochelle," and once more was Balfe's name everywhere spoken of with praise.

Bunn in his amusing and pleasantly egotistical memoirs tells an anecdote about Malibran in connection with this opera which may be repeated as showing the interest she took in the work, and of her anxiety to do the best she could for the composer.

"She had borne along the two first acts on the first night of performance in such a glow of triumph that she was bent, by some almost superhuman effort, to continue its glory to the final fall of the curtain. I went into her dressing-room, previous to her commencement of the third act, to ask how she felt, and she replied—

“‘Very tired; but’—and her eye suddenly lighted up—‘you angry devil, if you will contrive to get me a pint of porter into the desert scene, you shall have an encore to your finale.’

“Had I been dealing with any other performer, I should perhaps have hesitated in complying with a request that might have been dangerous in its application at the moment; but to check Malibran’s powers was to annihilate them. I therefore arranged that behind the pillar of drifted sand, on which she falls in a state of exhaustion towards the close of the desert scene, a small aperture should be made in the stage; and it is a fact that underneath the stage, through that aperture, a pewter pint of porter was conveyed to the parched lips of this rare child of song, which so revived her, after the terrible exertion the scene led to, that she electrified the audience, and had strength to repeat the charm with the finale. The novelty of the circumstance so tickled her fancy, and the draught itself was so extremely refreshing, that it was arranged during the subsequent run of the opera for the negro slave at the head of the governor’s procession, to have in the gourd

suspended at his neck the same quantity of the same beverage, to be applied to her lips on his first beholding the unhappy Isoline."

Whether this was really the true version of the story, or whether the story was true at all matters not now to inquire, the opera was successful, and the exertions of the prima donna helped to secure the enthusiastic reception of the work, and a widespread favour for the Finale.

The libretto was considerably inferior to that of the former opera by Fitzball, and Balfe seems to have cared more for the smoothness of the rhythm of his own musical cadences than to pay attention to the words of Bunn. He evidently did not regard as any hindrance to his work the false quantities of Bunn's verses, though at the time he fitted music to certain of the words he must have winced at the incorrect accents. He did certainly object to one song which spoke of "The moon o'er the mountain" when the action was supposed to take place by day. Bunn accommodatingly altered it to "the sun," but Balfe never fancied the song he had written to words whose sentiment was not violated by so easy a change,

and it was omitted after the first representation for it made no effect.

In the duet for Jules and Sans Regret in which the latter in his desire to enlist a recruit, cunningly offers money to the sorrowing, weary, and hungry hero, a portion of the words run thus :—

“JULES.—My heart's with anguish wasted,

SANS R.—Fresh hearts this will supply ;

JULES.—My lips have nothing tasted,

SANS R.—'Twill wine the brightest buy,

And cafés in plenty are nigh.”

Bunn's poem requires the word *café* to be in one syllable only, and Balfe has so set it, and has further shown his contempt for Bunn's inspiration by making the first two words of the last line in anapæstic metre. He also places an accent on the second syllable of the word “plenty.” Despite the tethers which hindered a high flight, the music is good in all points required, that is to say in dramatic effect, fitness for the voices engaged and brightness of scoring. Balfe fully maintained his reputation in this opera and increased his popularity. The manager's confidence in his powers enlarged with the approval of the public, and he selected a libretto by George Linley upon a sub-

ject taken from English history and entitled "Catherine Grey," which was produced on the anniversary of the day which had witnessed the triumph of "The Maid of Artois," namely on the 27th May, 1837. Madame Malibran was no longer able to help her friend Balfe by her incomparable talents. She had died a sad and terrible death, worn out by overwork and excitement in the September of 1836. She had fulfilled her promise to sing in one of Balfe's operas, and it was in one only, "The Maid of Artois," the first and the last original English opera she sang in London.

The cast of "Catherine Grey" included Miss Romer, who was considered to be the English Malibran, and Mrs. Wood (Miss Paton), the former playing Elizabeth and the latter Catherine. The natural dispositions and artistic qualifications of each were such as would have made a change of characters the better for the singers and for the opera. Balfe played the part of Lord Hertford at the request of the manager, who had noted how successfully his efforts proved with the public when one evening he performed Michael in "The Siege of Rochelle" when Phillips was absent from illness. It was on

this occasion that Thackeray being in Planché's box saw Balfe for the first time and made a characteristic sketch of him which was copied and printed in the "Recollections."

"Catherine Grey" had much charming music, but yet it did not keep the stage for any length of time. The rondo written for "The Siege of Rochelle" was introduced, and, as Balfe felt when he wrote it, did not make all the effect a finale should. Moreover the run was interrupted by the illness of King William, which made all theatrical business dull. The King died on the 20th of June. At the end of June an English version of "Norma," by Planché, was placed upon the stage of Drury Lane with Madame Schroeder Devrient as the priestess. She sang her part in the language she was best used to; "not a single word of English did she ever attempt to utter throughout the performance." This also was soon withdrawn. Bunn had, however, another glorious attraction "for his dear patrons the public." This was an adaptation of Fletcher's fine play of "Bonduca," also made by Planché. This was produced under the title of "Caractacus." For this Balfe wrote a

Chorus of Bards, which was the only thing in the play which was applauded, the house being filled at "half-price" the time the chorus occurred, by an audience who left the theatre as soon as the encore had been complied with.

With his usual hyperbole, Bunn, trusting to the attraction of a magnificent procession, had advertised the play as a "blaze of triumph," but the people did not come to the theatre to bask in its brilliancy.

Still ever ready to produce novelty, Bunn placed a new opera by Balfe upon the stage with unparalleled magnificence. This was "Joan of Arc," the words by Edward Fitzball. In it Balfe aimed at a loftier and more ambitious style of composition than that which he had attempted in "Catherine Grey." The words were more poetical, and the "situations" more striking and dramatic. The critics were just in their recognition of its merits, and sanguine as to its success, but it was "too high above the heads of the public, and they did not care to crane their necks in a position uncomfortable to themselves to admire beauties beyond their comprehension." That there

were beauties in the opera may be boldly asserted, and the fact that some of the songs, namely, "The Purple Corn Flower" and "The Peace of the Valley," with "cornetta" obbligato, and "Dear maid, when thou art sleeping," with violin obbligato, are known to this day. The characters were performed by Miss Romer, Mrs. Anderson, Miss Poole, Messrs. Guibilei, Seguin, Templeton, and Balfe. The scenery was painted by Grieve and his two sons.

The real cause of the want of interest proportionate to its merit which the public took in Balfe's opera may be referred to the production a few weeks before of a play on the same subject at Covent Garden Theatre, then under the management of Macready. The edge had been taken off the appetite of the public, and the opera which was earliest begun, and latest to be brought out was presumed to be an afterthought arising out of the success of the earliest produced. There was nothing in common between the play and the opera except the title. The opera was published and dedicated to Queen Victoria.

At Covent Garden also, the opera, "Amilie, or

the Love Test," by Balfe's early instructor Rooke, was winning great favour. It was said to have been completed while Balfe was yet his pupil, and that he had waited patiently for nearly twenty years to gain a hearing for his work.

Balfe's chief occupation in his leisure hours at this time was the composition of another new opera with words by Fitzball. It was announced as an "opera buffa" entitled "Diadeste," and was produced on the 17th May, 1838. The performers were Miss Romer, Miss Fanny Healy, Miss Poole, Messrs. Templeton, Guibilei, and Henry Phillips. The composer had a brilliant reception from the audience, and when during the run of the opera Phillips was taken ill and could not sing, or had taken some other engagement and sung elsewhere, the ever-ready Balfe, not to stop the opera in its career of success, played the part of Count Steno so well that Bunn was inclined to cancel the engagement of the original exponent of the part.

Balfe had been happy enough to have made a distinguished name among his countrymen as a singer and composer of English opera. He had entered so thoroughly into the spirit of the thing

that he had created a new style, to describe which a new adjective to the English tongue had been added. He had shown his facility and variety of resources, his originality and power, by the production of three new operas in the space of one year. His fame had spread beyond the walls of Drury Lane, and he was now invited by M. Laporte to write an opera for Her Majesty's Theatre, then one of the most important houses for Italian opera, in the world.

From this time Balfe gradually gave up singing in public to devote his time to composition. The public lost in one respect to gain greatly in another. Malibran, Grisi, Tamburini, and Lablache were wont to say that they found always much to admire, and not a few hints were to be gained in and from Balfe's singing. Rubini, who was considered the greatest male singer of this time, always said that "he must take off his hat to Balfe as his superior." As his health was never strong, and as his music was well received, he cultivated the more enduring art, and so he preferred the pursuit which was of greater service to the public.

CHAPTER X.

1838—1841.

ON the morning after the first performance of "Diadeste" Balfe received the libretto of an Italian opera by Manfredo Maggione, founded upon Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor," and entitled "Falstaff." The chief parts were to be undertaken by Grisi, Persiani, Albertazzi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache, artists for ever memorable in the annals of operatic art. The opera was actually conceived, written, and produced within the short space of two months. If this had represented the sole work of the period no astonishment need be expressed. But Balfe possessed a power of concentration, a faculty for work, and an untiring industry rarely found in one man. He seemed to be always busy with various engagements, but still he found time for composition. He was much sought after as a singer, as a player, and as a teacher. All the time left him for composition was during the "wee



CRISI.

short hours ayont the twal." Night after night did he labour at his work quietly and earnestly, making time when he seemed to have filled up every hour. Thus it was that the new Italian opera was produced. It was "the first opera written for that establishment by a native composer since the 'Olympiade' of Arne." "Falstaff" was produced under the direction of Laporte at Her Majesty's Theatre on the 19th July, 1838, and achieved a most brilliant success. The invention, the fancy, and the air of poetry which surrounded and pervaded the whole conception charmed every one. The performers were all well disposed towards the composer, and exerted themselves cordially. The music suited their powers. "They were fitted," as Lablache the Falstaff said, "like gloves. The elegance of the manufacture had concealed the natural defects of the hands they covered." The trio, "Vorrei Parlar," sung by Grisi, Albertazzi, and Caremoli (for Persiani did not sing in the opera), was encored three times, and although it was written more than forty years ago, and was "only destined to please the ears of a thoughtless audience, fasci-

nated by the success of the young composer, so long as the three graces—Albertazzi, Caremoli, and Grisi—could combine to sing it," it still finds its way into programmes, and still delights the public ear. The melody, "O mia gioia," spread like wildfire, but fell "like balm upon the wearied senses," and is not even now forgotten. Personal influence can have little now to do with such continued popularity, for singers and composers have all passed into "the land of the blest." It must therefore be due to the worth of the music and the genius of the composer that it is still remembered in this "age of succeeding time." Laporte was right when he invited Balfe to write an opera for the great quartett, Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache. His keen judgment and knowledge of men, his readiness and willingness to provide his subscribers and the public with the sort of entertainment well calculated to please, and his desire to advance the interests of art, were all exhibited in his selection of Balfe as a composer, albeit he was an English composer.

Rossini had laid down his pen, and had de-

clared his intention of writing no more until the "Jews had finished their Sabbath," a phrase whose obscurity of meaning cannot be penetrated even now. Its purport is fully understood, for Rossini's pen was at rest. Balfe had been called the English Rossini over and over again, less because he wrote in the style of that great master than because of his aptitude in "finding out musical tunes" that fell pleasantly upon the ear and awakened sympathetic feelings in the heart.

Laporte could not get Rossini, so he secured Balfe.

Troubles were already shadowing over the manager of the Italian Opera, and prevented him fulfilling his intention of inviting Balfe to make a second venture in the classic region of foreign art.

The time was not allowed to pass idly by.

Song after song was poured forth from the same inexhaustible stream from whence the greater tributaries of opera had flowed, and popularity and success were following and surrounding the gifted and genial musician. His house in Conduit Street was the scene of many a brilliant reunion of artists and amateurs, Rossini's "Stabat Mater"

being among the many new works that were first heard in Balfe's house in 1841.

He continued his engagement as a member of the Drury Lane Company, but it was Bunn's last season for the present. His extravagant ventures had brought him no lasting profit, and he was at his final resource. He knew that English opera had brought him most gain, so he concluded that opera in English might reillumine the "blaze of triumph." With this object in view he engaged Henry Rowley Bishop as conductor, and brought out Mozart's "Don Juan" with Balfe as the hero, and Madame Albertazzi, Miss Betts, Miss Poole, and Henry Phillips in the other parts. Unfortunately for Bunn, the season came to an untimely end. He had educated the people to expect spectacle on the grandest scale in all his productions. There was no reason, and no possibility of, introducing any in "Don Juan," so he adopted an entirely opposite plan. The *mise en scène* was poor in the extreme, and notwithstanding his fine band, and excellent vocal company, the theatre was empty, and Bunn retired with a loss of more than £25,000.

Balfe now, free from all ties of engagements, burned to revisit his native land. He was preparing to start for Dublin on a journey of pleasure, when good fortune once more presented itself in a form calculated to make the journey pleasant as one of business. This was an offer of an engagement as chief baritone to the company formed by Mr. and Mrs. Wood at the request of Mr. Calcraft, then manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin. The engagement was accepted, and Balfe started with a light heart and high spirits for the land he had left some sixteen years before. Since then what changes had occurred. Would his mother be glad to welcome her son? He had kept his word, and was returning not unheralded by fame. Would his countrymen remember the poor little fiddler who had delighted them with his performance on an instrument as big as himself?

His welcome was as hearty as he could wish. It was just such as he would have accorded had the conditions been reversed.

A public dinner was given to him at Morison's Hotel on the 26th of December, 1838, and a tes-

timonial in the form of a beautiful gold snuff-box, "To the composer of 'The Siege of Rochelle' and 'The Maid of Artois.'"

During his stay in Dublin Balfe was admitted to the mysteries and privileges of ancient free and accepted masons, a special meeting of the brethren of No. 8 Lodge having been called together for the purpose on the 3rd of October, 1838.

In the following year Mr. Calcraft produced "The Siege of Rochelle," "The Maid of Artois," and "Diadeste," with Adelaide Kemble as prima donna. Balfe organized a tour, and produced "Diadeste" in several of the county towns, Limerick and Galway among others.

Accustomed to the greatest theatres in Europe, he was a little "taken aback" at the condition of some of the country temples of Thespis and their stage appointments. Thus at the Old Theatre at the Quay at Limerick, when the performers assembled for the night's representation, the roof was in so dilapidated a state that the audience in the pit had to put up their umbrellas to keep the rain off. The orchestra, led by Levey, Balfe's old

friend and fellow-pupil, had to play while protected by like contrivances. The stage, fortunately for the comfort of the singers, was in better condition. The performance was welcomed with the heartiest applause. The audience remained enchanted despite the inconvenience they suffered. Balfe, when telling the story, was wont to declare that it was the first and only *al fresco* representation he had given in his life, and he felt prompted to substitute certain words in his well-known beautiful duet, so as to make it sing thus:—

Diadeste, charming maid,
Sing beneath th' umbrella's shade.

The tour in Ireland was profitable to the managers, and it was in pondering over the results of the adventure that Balfe unadvisedly determined to try that line of business on his own account.

CHAPTER XI.

1841.

SINCE the production of "Diadeste" Balfe had written no opera. Rooke had produced his "Henrique, or the Love Pilgrim," in May, 1839, while Balfe was away in Dublin, and when he returned he heard that the brothers Barnett had arranged a scheme for the production of English opera at the Prince's, now called the St. James's Theatre. This venture was commenced on the 1st December, 1840, with Frank Romer's opera, "Fridolin," and ended on the 8th of the same month. The failure did not deter the enthusiastic Balfe from pursuing the scheme he had cherished in his heart. He arranged to take the English Opera House, and was happy in being supported, as was said, by a goodly list of subscribers, at the head of which was the Queen, the Prince Albert, and many of the nobility. His company was small, but in every way efficient. If everybody was to

be trusted, and would behave as loyally as the new manager intended to do, success must follow. His name stood well with the public, and he had prepared a new opera, "Keolanthé," which had been written by his old friend and colleague Fitzball. Upon this opera he had bestowed a greater amount of care and attention than he had ever yet spent upon any work since "Atala," which was lost.

The book was perfectly original, and inspired the composer with "thoughts meet and deeds becoming."

The plot, also the invention of Fitzball, may be thus told. A student of Padua, Andrea, about to be married to the sister of his friend, Filippo Pavia, contemplating the beauty of the lotus flower, of which he has been reading, is transported in imagination to the shores of ancient Egypt, and beholds Keolanthé, an Egyptian princess, who is protected and endowed with magical gifts by the deities of the Nile. Every tie is forgotten in this insane love; he is the means of causing terrible catastrophes by his employment of the magic lotus flower, and when his crimes can no longer accu-

multate in horror, he awakes to find all a dream, and the bridal party filling his room to welcome him upon his wedding morning.

The greater part of the music of the opera was written by Balfe when on a tour in the west of England during the months of April, May, and part of June, 1840. He seemed fascinated with the book which Fitzball had written, and at every possible opportunity he resumed his labours upon a theme which was agreeable to him.

The poet and the musician were in perfect sympathy in this instance.

Fitzball calls the opera "one of my dream-revels with imagination—a flight across golden deserts with the Queen of Fancy."

In speaking further of the work, and the circumstances under which it was written, he says:—" 'Keolanthe' is unquestionably the best of Balfe's operas, that is to say his *finest original* conception, and advances nearer to the stars." Keolanthe, the heroine, was played by Madame Balfe. Of her performance Fitzball tells us "that the dignity of the princess was nothing lost in her; the splendour of her voice, the richness of her attire, the

fineness, the grandeur of her acting (she was a *great* actress, realizing to my imagination all that I had heard related of Clairon), the supernatural manner which she assumed, took every one by surprise, while her *deep-thought* conception of the part seemed to set every one *thinking*. . . Wilson, a fine tenor, was the student Andreo, Stretton and H. Phillips, Filippo and Ombrastro, and Miss Gould, Pavina. The opera cost, in the getting up with its exquisite costumes and scenery, much more than a thousand pounds; it certainly had a tremendous reception; the stage covered over with wreaths of flowers, among which stood Madame Balfe, like Iris, with her offerings of garland lotuses at her feet."

The opera was announced for the 4th of March, 1841, but was postponed because of the absence of Phillips, who had made an engagement to sing that day in Dublin without saying anything about it until the last moment. On the 9th the opera was produced, and made a hit. The music was acknowledged to be in Balfe's happiest vein. It was also admitted to be original, and free from imitation of the style of any particular

school. It was, in fact, thoroughly "Balfean." It ran for two months, and its successful career was brought to an end by the disloyalty of the artists. On the 13th of May Phillips failed to make his appearance in the theatre, and offered no explanation. He does not allude to the circumstance in his "Musical and Personal Recollections," nor, in fact, say much about the whole business in his book. Mr. John Barnett withdrew his pupil, Miss Gould, and Balfe, in an apologetic speech to the audience, explained how he had been abandoned by those on whom he counted for support.

So ended the great and enthusiastic design of founding a national English opera. In this great notion Balfe was before his time, and moreover he was not the right sort of man to undertake such a scheme. He thought to create a national opera by inviting all the known English opera writers to compose works, and thus to show the public that there were as good musicians among the natives of the country worthy of support as the foreigner, upon whom was lavished all the praise, and who also obtained the greater

share of recognition. Barnett, Rooke, Lover, and Macfarren were invited to co-operate. Lover had written a comic operetta called "Paddy Whack in Italia," which Balfe produced. Macfarren had been invited by Balfe to compose an opera on the subject of "Don Quixote." This was placed in rehearsal, and would have been brought out but for the untimely end of the scheme. Five years later Balfe, knowing the excellent qualities of the work, recommended it for production at Drury Lane, which recommendation was accepted, and the opera was performed successfully. Barnett was said "to be thinking about his opera," and Benedict had actually commenced his "Brides of Venice." This also was brought out later at Drury Lane.

It could not, therefore, be said that Balfe had any selfish motive in endeavouring to start the enterprise. On the contrary, his conduct in the whole matter was most self-denying. He refused 300 guineas offered by Madame Vestris for the production of "Keolanthé" at the Olympic, and he lost more than a thousand pounds besides, which had been expended in trying to fill the

whirlpool maw of a theatre. He had risked his popularity with the profession, and he had lost his health. Even under these trying circumstances he preserved his good humour, remaining then as he was always, genial, bright, and sunny. The chagrin he suffered induced him to turn his back upon London, and to confine his publications to a few detached pieces of the sort which the publishers were always ready to take. These costing his genius no effort, and being very useful in replenishing a weakened purse, he was wont to call "pot-boilers," a term which to this day is employed by his successors for the like kind of productions.

He longed to find some theme more worthy of his efforts than the production of songs, albeit the public gladly received these instalments of his talents. It was therefore with no little ardour that he started for Paris as soon as he could get free, upon the invitation of Madame Grisi, who was anxious to appear in another opera by Balfe, for which she proposed to provide the *libretto*. She—the reigning queen of the operatic world—could command, and managers were willing to

obey. The memory of "Falstaff" was pleasant. She delighted in the music, and had selected the opera to play at her benefit at Her Majesty's Theatre, and had been the means of introducing many of its *morceaux* to the concert-rooms of the Continent.

Arrived at Paris, one of his first calls was upon Rossini. The maestro gave Balfe a hearty welcome. He had heard of the treatment he had experienced, and was very indignant at the lack of appreciation which his countrymen had exhibited towards him. He shook his fist in the air, and said in the hearing of a friend when Balfe had left, addressing an imaginary English audience in his epigrammatic French—

"*Vous êtes des bêtes, des animaux.* You have got one of the greatest composers of the age, who has poured forth his soul in melody for you, and you would not have him. He deserved all honour; you have given him contempt. *Cochons d'Anglais, va !*"

"Keolanthé" was Balfe's best work at that time, and was only surpassed in merit by the "Knight of the Leopard," or "The Talisman," which he left unfinished at his death.

CHAPTER XII.

1841—1843.

THE title which was selected for the proposed new opera was “Elfrida,” the author being Manfredo Maggioni. Balfe made a series of sketches and rough memoranda of the chief situations and arias in the remarkably neat hand he wrote at that period—the sketch-book is preserved—and upon his arrival in Paris he set himself to work with his customary zeal. The opera was nearly completed, and he was in expectation of some degree of success, especially in those parts of the work which he had written to suit Madame Grisi’s voice. Preliminary paragraphs concerning the opera were inserted in the musical papers, and Balfe, “the Auber of England,” another new title, was said to have come expressly to Paris to superintend the rehearsals of his grand opera in three acts, of which the chief parts were destined for Grisi, Tamburini, and Mario, then engaged at the Théâtre Italien.

The opera was not produced. By the time it would be finished, and the arrangements of the theatre would permit of its being placed upon the stage, Grisi would be unable to appear, and so the cup of prosperity which was raised to the lips of the expectant artist was dashed to the ground. Balfe's good fortune seemed to have completely deserted him. He kept a brave heart, however, though the situation was a sore trial to him.

His sensitive soul shrank from the contemplation of the collapse into which his affairs appeared to have fallen, but his brave spirit supported him through the trial, and enabled him to keep his sorrows to himself, and to preserve the same bright and joyous demeanour which had earned for him from his friend Fitzball the name of "Sunny Balfe."

It was with inward doubt and anguish but with outward calmness that he called upon Erard and disclosed the state of anxiety which troubled him.

Erard offered to lend his Salon to the composer, and suggested that he should give a concert, the programme of which should be made up entirely of his own music.

Balfe was alarmed yet amused at the daring proposition, feared lest he should provoke all sorts of sarcastic comments upon his egotistical presumption, but all his objections were overruled, by Erard, who said—"Much is already known of your works here. I will invite the Manager of the Opera Comique and other artists to hear your music." The consequence was that a "Grand Concert Balfe" was announced. Among the artists who "assisted" was George Alexander Osborne, then resident in Paris.

The room was crowded with curious visitors who had paid their money to be amused at the performance. Balfe's association with the artists of Paris twelve years before had left him many friends. He was able to ensure a very good representation of his works with the aid which was voluntarily offered. Inspired by Balfe's geniality and talent the artists strove to do their best, and succeeded. Those who came to be amused at the rashness of a man who had compounded a programme of his own compositions, and that man above all an Englishman, were disappointed of the pleasure they had anticipated, and re-

warded by another they did not expect to find. Piece after piece was encored with enthusiasm, and the gratified composer felt his heart swell with pride as the most fastidious audience in the world accepted his efforts with signs of the highest approval. "His music was sparkling, and flashed like a splendid brilliant that gives out radiant colours from a thousand facets, and astonishes and captivates by its beauty."*

His mind relieved of an oppressive weight, full of gratitude to Erard and the good Parisians who had so enthusiastically recognised his genius, the gloomy clouds of anxiety dispersed from his mind and sunshine once more reigning in his heart, his face radiant with joy, he returned home to share his happiness with his family. Wearied in body but sprightly in mind, he threw himself upon a sofa prepared to answer any questions that might be addressed to him, amused and delighted with the gravity and consideration of his eldest daughter, Gigia, as she directed the servant in her pretty polyglot manner—

* "Sa musique est chatoyante, elle resplendit comme une pierre fine et montre mille facettes que émerveillent et séduisant."

“Of papa les pantoufles bringen sie hier al-
l’istante.”

The “Concert Balfe” had established his reputation in Paris, and was further to be the means of extending it not only in the French capital, but throughout the Continent.

Early in the morning of the day following when Balfe was seated at his breakfast “à l’ Anglaise” a mysterious visitor cloaked and carefully wrapped up as though the winter had already appeared was announced. He had refused to give his name, but would not leave until he had seen Balfe.

“ Vous êtes Balfe, je suis Scribe, et je viens vous demander de faire un opéra comique avec moi.”

The announcement, so welcome, so unexpected, caused a revulsion of feeling which made Balfe literally tremble with excitement. He soon recovered himself, and accepted the proposal of the dramatic writer with joy. Scribe confessed that he was one among the many present at the invitation of Erard to hear his music at the concert of the day before. He was charmed with the exhibition and versatility of Balfe’s genius, and desired to associate his name with that of the musician

whose works had given him so much real pleasure.

This unsolicited testimony to his abilities from one whose fame was unequalled in the world of art, whose industry was enormous, and whose fertility was prodigious, was very gratifying to Balfe.

A satisfactory arrangement was made, and Balfe's spirits were elevated to a height corresponding with the depth to which they had been plunged a day or so before. After all he was to be permitted to appeal to the judgment of the Parisians in a form best suited to display his powers.

The opera was called "Le Puits d'Amour" the *scenario* or plot was sketched out at once, and the libretto was sent piece by piece, either in the handwriting of Scribe, or in that of M. de Saint-Georges, his literary partner on this occasion.

Balfe remembered that Rossini, Boieldieu, Adolphe Adam, Auber, Meyerbeer, Halévy, Hérold, Carafa, and his old master Cherubini had all been indebted to Scribe for occasional literary help, and with such an illustrious array before

him, it was with some diffidence that he entered the ranks of the noble army of artists. If he could not rise by promotion to a higher position than that which now presented itself, he would, at all events, strive to do his duty there, and deserve an honourable name.

With the ardour and confidence of genius he worked on, encouraged by his loving wife who kept from him all knowledge of the sarcastic comments that were imported into the musical journals upon the announcement of the fact that an English composer was engaged in writing an opera for the Opéra Comique.

This pious concealment was easily made, for Balfe was called away from Paris before the completion of his opera, to fulfil an engagement at the Norwich festival in September of that year (1842), and at other places in England.

His engagements being ended, he returned to Paris and finished his opera.

It was produced on the 20th of April, 1843, at the Opéra Comique. The verdict of the public was unanimously accorded in favour of the music. Madame Anna Thillon, then in all the pride of

her youth and beauty, sang Geraldine's music so that it was compared to "a fountain of pearls." The composer's genius was fully recognised. Those who had been foremost in their unbelief in his powers were the first to express their recantation and their full conversion. As a comfort to their own consciences they remembered that he had studied with Cherubini, that he had earned his first honours as a singer and as a composer at the Théâtre Italien, they were therefore not unwilling to assure themselves that he was all but a Frenchman. He was distantly related by blood to the common Celtic stock. He was more closely allied by the ties of art.

Congratulations upon his success poured in on all sides. Musicians, poets, critics and artists were proud to know and to be known by him. His acquaintance extended itself from the world of art to the domain of politics and fashion, and he even received encouragement and countenance from the King Louis Philippe, the source and spring of honour. The King was pleased to accept the dedication of the published work, and expressed his desire when further success was won

from the public, to decorate him with the cordon of the legion of honour. He could not then accept this distinction as an Englishman, and so the King presented him with a magnificent "gold medal" struck especially for him. All these marks of recognition were sweet to Balfe. Sweeter far was the invitation from the director of the Opéra Comique to follow up the success of "*Le Puits d'Amour*" by the production of another opera, which should be ready to take the stage when the first began to pale in its popularity. This event was apparently far distant. Nevertheless he commenced the new task with assiduity. The author of his first French book, Scribe, was not ready with another. He was gratified to know that he had been the means of finding for his countrymen a new pleasure, and enjoyed the success of Balfe as much as the public.

The book upon which he was now engaged, was founded upon an old French legend of the time of Charlemagne, was called "*Les Quatre Fils Aymon*," and the authors were Messrs. de Leuwen and Brunswick.

Before this was completed and produced, Balfe

was called to London, where a new day of prosperity was dawning for him—a day whose rays of sunshine were to cheer and enlighten the remainder of his path through life, undimmed by the passing clouds of adversity, vexation or slight.

CHAPTER XIII.

1843.

At the beginning of the year 1843, musical affairs in London were in a transitional state. Public attention had been drawn to the need of including music in the course of elementary instruction in schools, and the Committee of the Council of Education encouraged Mr. John Hullah to arrange classes, and to formulate a plan by which future-schoolmasters should have the advantage of a certain amount of regular training. Those already engaged in teaching should also be permitted to acquire the knowledge necessary to place themselves on a level with their younger brethren.

The enthusiasm with which the subject was taken up testified to the eager desires of the people to make themselves more closely acquainted with a subject for which they had already shown an earnest though unscientific predilection.

From this time forth music was no longer to be a mystery whose culture was confined to a few.

All who learned the rudiments of the art might never hope to become composers. But they would be in possession of a nucleus of information which should help them to enjoy with greater delight the efforts of those who were.

Hullah's teaching created intelligent audiences. Music, hitherto enjoyed for the mere æsthetical pleasure it brought, was certain to be better appreciated so soon as the power was given to the people to estimate correctly the talent required in the construction of the material. An acquaintance with the difficulties involved certainly excited respect for the artist who could successfully conquer those difficulties, and who by a right use of art was able to conceal the art employed. No one hailed this movement with greater delight than Balfe. He saw in it the prospect of a realization of the most earnestly cherished wish of his heart, the establishment of a national opera.

It is true that genius like the poet is born, not made, but it is equally true that the possession of genius in the individual may be traced to the predisposition for a certain subject in the family to which he belongs. There is no instance on record

of a man attaining eminence in the musical profession unsupported by the fact that the liking for the art was not congenital. The English have always been a music-loving people, they would, in time, become music-producing, if music was encouraged as an essential need of education. Thus the first step towards the realization of this great project, a national English opera, would be gained. The cultivation of music among the people would suggest the formation of a national academy, upon a similar but broader basis than that upon which the Royal Academy was founded. This national academy would generate a race of musicians, and it would become necessary in time, to establish a theatre or opera house whereat and wherein the efforts of native composers might be tried before an appreciative jury of their countrymen.

Balfe thought when he started his ill-fated venture that he had the help of enough composers to enable him to continue his scheme. The only one who had foresight and wisdom enough to help and actively to encourage it, was George Alexander

Macfarren. The other composers of the period gave only a half-hearted assistance. The time for the recognition of English art as an actuality was not come.

Balfe thought it had, and with his customary enthusiasm hastened to realize the end when the beginning only was before him. His reasoning was too sanguine. If in France such a thing as a national opera can exist, why cannot wealthy England support a like design ?

France had been prepared through a long course of years, through all sorts of convulsions, to maintain an undertaking of the kind as a matter of political economy. Some of its children made music a profession. It was therefore necessary that the means of instruction as well as an area for practice should be provided. This done, France has never lacked musicians either executive or creative. The genius exhibited by some has been recognised beyond her own boundaries. The talents of the many have not been despised, but have been restricted to their original limit. The moral effect of this has been most salutary.

The honours of the Academy of France, and the favours of the highest potentates were rewards to which all might aspire.

In England there were no honours which might be gained, except such empty titles as were open to the full purse. A musician was only "a fiddler," having no means of acquiring education under the protection of the Government, possessed of no social status by virtue of his profession, harassed rather by prejudices against it, and condemned by the State to be classed among "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars."

Only a man of great genius, supported by determined will and an ardent belief in the humanising influence of the art he professed, could ever hope to rise to superior rank, and that only in the estimation of his countrymen, his sole reward. The seed sown by this movement for a time might grow among tares, but they would not destroy its vitality, or lessen the abundance of the harvest in good time. The provision of musical teaching, and the ultimate elevation of native genius to the position it ought to occupy, was undoubtedly due to the lively interest and actual exertions of one

of the wisest princes of modern times, the late Prince Consort.

He noted the great love for music which the English nation possessed, and laid out a plan by which that predisposition might be strengthened by scientific knowledge. Skilled in the art and practice of music himself, his large-heartedness and broad-mindedness conceived a design which should tend to the augmentation of the pure pleasures of music, especially to those who can recognise the skill employed in the invention of new combinations.

For Balfe as an acknowledged national composer he always expressed the most lively interest. He admired his genius greatly, and claimed admiration for it from others.

If ever England takes proper rank among the musical countries of the world, it will be due to the forethought of this great prince in the project for providing the means of musical instruction for the masses.

Balfe heard of the progress of the movement while he was yet abroad. He longed to have some share in the work. With his customary alacrity

he accepted an invitation to return to London, and hastened thither to superintend the final rehearsals of "Geraldine," the English version of "Le Puits d'Amour," by Gilbert à Beckett, at the Princess's Theatre in the month of August. The performers were Mdle. Eugenie Garcia (a cousin of Malibran), George Barker, H. R. Allen, and Paul Bedford. He also undertook to write another opera for Drury Lane, which theatre Bunn had again taken undismayed by his former disastrous experience.

The opera intended for Drury Lane was the world-famed "Bohemian Girl." The book had been given to Balfe by Bunn in 1841, soon after the production of "Keolanthé." A greater part of the music had been written at the time, and Balfe, finding subsequently little chance of its being produced after the collapse of his great national opera scheme, had taken some one or two numbers of the music for his French opera. He rewrote those portions which had been employed there, and revised those that still remained. Like most earnest and enthusiastic souls, he became alive to the necessity of bestowing greater care

upon his works in proportion as he felt that he was attaining an eminence which exposed him more completely to view than he had been before.

Impressed with this thought, he added and improved the score of "The Siege of Rochelle" when it was decided to open the theatre with that opera. Every care was taken with the *mise en scène*, for Bunn knew the value of an adequate mounting as a factor of the sum of success. A splendid band was engaged, and the services of Mr.—now Sir Julius—Benedict were secured as conductor. The success of the opening nights exceeded the most sanguine expectations. After Balfe's opera, an English version, by Fitzball, of Donizetti's "La Favorita," was presented, with Duprez in his original part. "The Bohemian Girl" was "underlined," as it is called; that is to say, mention was made of the proposed production at the bottom of the play-bill which contained the announcement of the current performances.

The "libretto" of "The Bohemian Girl" was founded upon the same story out of the "Novelas Ejemplares" of Cervantes which had furnished Weber with his "Preciosa." This it is probable

Bunn never knew until he was informed by some of the press writers after the performance. He had taken the idea from a ballet written by Saint Georges, the literary collaborateur of Scribe in the concoction of the book of "*Le Puits d'Amour.*" This ballet, entitled "*La Gipsy,*" in three acts and five tableaux was produced in the Grand Opera in Paris on the 28th of January, 1839. The music of the first act was written by M. Benoist, that of the second by Ambroise Thomas, and that of the third by the Marquis Marliani. M. Gustave Chouquet, in his comprehensive, careful, and interesting "*Histoire de la Musique Dramatique,*" Paris, 1873, says that "the second act, composed of three tableaux, was afterwards given separately. M. Thomas had been indebted to his memory of Beethoven, Weber, Hummel, and Schubert for the melodies of many of his themes, but had displayed a master hand in the richness of the scoring."

Bunn proposed one or two titles for the opera. That of "*The Gipsy*" was overruled, inasmuch as it had already served as the distinction for an unsuccessful transpontine drama. He then thought of "*Thaddeus of Warsaw,*" the name of that hero

being taken by him from Miss Jane Porter's novel which was well known, and, to Bunn's mind, served as a typical Polish name. The possibility of his opera being mistaken for an adaptation of the popular novel caused him to change his mind. "La Bohémienne" was next proposed. This was rejected on the ground that it would be unbecoming for an English opera to bear a French title. Our native tongue not making any distinction of sex in words by a series of accommodating modifications, such as are found in all other European languages, was an obstacle which stood in the way of "The Bohemian" as a title, for this name might apply to creature of the male sex, and the chief character was a girl. Hence "The Bohemian Girl." Clumsy as this title appears upon reflection, time and circumstances have proved it to be efficient. The word "Bohemian" has since become recognised as describing a being with a profound contempt for the restraints of society, and one whose object in life seems to be to live in a perpetual state of picnic in a garret or like habitation.

"The Bohemian Girl" was produced on the

27th of November, 1843. Miss Rainforth was Arline, Miss Betts the Queen of the Gipsies, Mr. Harrison, then rising into fame as a tenor singer, was Thaddeus, Mr. Stretton, Devilshoof, Mr. Borrani the Count, and Mr. Daruset, Florestein. The lesser parts were represented by Mr. Howell, Captain; Mr. Binge, Officer; Messrs. Birt and Ridgway, the first and second Gipsies; and the Child in the first act was played by Miss Payne, who afterwards became Mrs. Aynsley Cook.

The first night the audience seemed to be almost mad with enthusiasm. The chorus "In the gipsy's life" was encored, "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls" and "Then you'll remember me" were twice repeated, and "The heart bowed down" was also encored, and the singers secured immortal fame.

Fitzball, who was present at the performance, tells us that Bunn was exceedingly ill during the rehearsals of this opera, but yet he gave his directions with a disregard of his bodily sufferings which amounted to heroism. He further says that the opera met with the most unqualified success. The Messrs. Chappell gave Balfe £500 for the

right of printing and publishing the songs, and so great was the demand for copies of the several ballads that they saw their way to the realization of their outlay in a very short time.

It is a fact, however, that for a few nights after the first the opera did not draw. The audiences that came never slackened their enthusiasm, but it was not until nearly a fortnight had passed that anything like adequate houses rewarded the venture. In consequence of this Balfe left London for Paris, where he had other business in hand, and not long after the aspect of affairs completely changed at Drury Lane. The houses, from being indifferent, sometimes worse than indifferent, became gradually fuller, till at last the crowded state of the theatre which had always been connected with Balfean opera began to show a brilliant pecuniary as well as artistic success. Thereupon Bunn wrote to Balfe to this purport: "Come back to London. 'The Bohemian Girl' is a triumph. Houses crammed every night." And so it went on till the hundredth night.

/ The success of the opera and its influence on society were unparalleled. Everything was tinged

with a gipsy complexion. How much and how little was owing to the influence of "The Bohemian Girl" may be readily understood. Certain it is that scores of songs relative to gipsy life were issued from the press. Novelists wrote stories in which were revived the old worked-up incidents connected with the wandering tribe. Readers began to inquire for George Borrow's book on the "Zincali," which had been issued two years before, and his publishers were encouraged to produce a new book by him in consequence of the success of the first; and, in short, the town was gipsy-mad. The popularity of "The Bohemian Girl" did not cease with the run of the opera in London. Standigl, the well-remembered bass, the original representative, three years later, of the chief part in Mendelssohn's oratorio "Elijah" at Birmingham, produced it in a German version, and so popular did it become in Germany that it was played at three different theatres in Vienna at the same time, and has continued to hold a conspicuous place in the repertoires of German theatres under the title of "Die Ziguenerinn" to the present day. As "La Zingara"

it has been played in Italy and in London, and in Paris, as "*La Bohémienne*," it was placed on the stage of the Théâtre Lyrique with a score and splendour undreamed of even by Bunn.

CHAPTER XIV.

1844—1846.

THE remarkable fact that Balfe was the first, and until the present day, the only English composer who was invited to write for the French stage, was further supplemented by another, namely that his first essay completely satisfied the demands of French taste.

Scribe, whose mysterious invitation was the commencement of a long friendship, believed that a prosperous career awaited Balfe in France. He wrote for him a second book "Le Jour de Noël" to help his belief become a tangible realization. This opera, though nearly finished, was never produced, for reasons that will be set forth in due time.

While "The Bohemian Girl" was continuing to attract large audiences in London, "Le Puits d'Amour" was no less attractive in Paris, or in its English form as "Geraldine" in London, at the Princess's Theatre.

It was necessary that our composer should limit the number of his engagements to sing at concerts and elsewhere notwithstanding the tempting profits his efforts brought, in order to be on the spot to superintend the rehearsals of his new opera "*Les Quatre Fils Aymon*" in Paris. Many and careful were these rehearsals, and at last the opera was brought out on the 15th of July, 1844.

The libretto was written by Messrs. de Leuwen and Brunswick, and the principal soprano part was intended for Madame Anna Thillon, who had made so favourable an impression by her singing and acting in "*Les Puits d'Amour*."

In this occurs the splendid bass song "*Sentinelles*" which at once struck the fancy of the audience, established on a firmer basis the fame of the composer, and attracted attention to the character of the whole of the opera. The divine light of melody which shone in every bar was augmented in the minds of the Parisian critics by the originality of the treatment throughout.

There was a little disappointment in Balfe's heart when he found that he was not to have the services of Madame Anna Thillon in his opera, but

he was somewhat consoled when he found that Madame Stolz was named as the prima donna. This again was not to be. These changes delayed the production of the work.

The cast as finally settled was a little weak, but Balfe succeeded in winning commendation from a Parisian audience a second time. The beauty of his music could be observed even through the medium of an indifferent cast. The prima donna was Madame Darcier, the tenor M. Mocker, and M. Thermann was the bass. The famous M. Chollet was also in the opera.

The French publishers issued full scores of the two operas produced in Paris, and these with "L'Etoile de Seville" were the only full scores that were printed of the whole of Balfe's works, all the rest that were published were in the form of pianoforte arrangements only. Musicians in France and Germany took very kindly to these works. In the latter country the "Liebesbrunnen," and the "Vier Haimon's Kinder," are prime favourites to this day. The design and execution of the latter work so pleased the German critics that they said—"Its melodies are sweet, and the

scoring masterly. Mozart might have signed it."

In the month of November in the same year (1844) "The Castle of Aymon," the English version of "Les Quatre Fils," was played at the Princess's Theatre successfully, though the cast was as weak in proportion as the original French one. Miss Condell an inexperienced debutante, Henry Allen, Charles Horn, a son of Balfe's old master and friend, and Adam Leffler, were entrusted with the parts.

/ Balfe had now given up his house in the Rue Lafitte, in Paris, and had come to reside permanently in London, at No. 19, Piccadilly, where he was wont to reside during his temporary sojourn in town. This dwelling he made noteworthy, as it was there he wrote the greater part of his immortal opera "The Bohemian Girl," and other works of the period.

In the years 1843 and 1844 it has been shown that Balfe was by no means idle. He was yet to crown this period of activity by the production of another opera, his friend and colleague Alfred Bunn supplying the book. Once again did Bunn seek a French original as the theme for his work,

he selected this time an opera which Halévy had set to music. Saint Georges again was the author borrowed from, and the subject was "La Reine de Chypre" which had been placed on the stage of the Grand Opera in Paris the 22nd of December, 1841. Bunn gave his new work the title of "The Daughter of St. Mark," and placed it on the stage on the 27th of November, 1844.

The diction of his book was made the subject of sarcastic attacks on the part of the comic press. It was in many instances very absurd, it is true, and resembled the "monstre" which French libretto writers were wont to offer to composers who required a peculiar rhythm for which the poets were unprepared with ideas in conformity with the subject treated. In several cases they were the nonsense verses of the schoolboy with a catch-phrase that served to illustrate the sentiment of the scene. Without any desire to continue or to revive the controversy excited—there was a controversy on this ridiculous subject—it must be said that Bunn never stayed for a rhyme when he wanted one. If his rhymes were such as could not possibly complete a sentence in a distich.

or quatrain he continued the idea through half the next line. In the "Bohemian Girl" among other gems of expression we find—

When the fair land of Poland was ploughed by the hoof
Of the ruthless invader. When might
With steel to the bosom, and flame to the roof,
Completed her triumph o'er right.

His imagery was often incomprehensible, as for example, that which is seen in one of his lines in the same opera—

When hollow hearts shall wear a mask.

Other instances might be quoted were it worth the trouble. Among other of his peculiarities was that of inventing words to eke out his rhymes. "Beweep" is a word that has not yet found its way even into those English dictionaries the compilers of which boast of having made ten thousand additional words "as an attraction. Of like nature, the directors of Vauxhall Gardens were wont in the days of their waning prosperity to advertise" an additional "ten thousand" with the difference that it was "lamps" not words.

Those among the audience at the first night of "The Daughter of St. Mark" who had seen

Halévy's "La Reine de Chypre," admitted that Balfe had treated the subject with more success than the original. The splendour of the mounting the earnestness of the performers were praised in terms corresponding. There is only one principal female part in the opera, that of Caterina, and this gave Miss Rainforth the best opportunity for her powers. Mr. Harrison was the tenor (Adolph). Mr. Weiss, who also made his first important appearance in London on this occasion, was selected by Balfe for the part of Moncenigo, Mr. Borrani was Andrea, and Mr. Burdini the King. This was the first of Balfe's English operas in which the whole of the action was expressed in music. In the "Bohemian Girl" there was some dialogue unset to recitative, "The Daughter of St. Mark" was in the form of a "Grand Opera Seria" and as such it was distinguished on the title page.

In reviewing the music at the present time, forty years after it was written, the reader cannot fail to be struck by the manly grip of the subject which Balfe's treatment shows. The overture is an announcement of the themes made use of in the work, and is worthy for the brilliancy of the

scoring. There is no noise for mere noise sake, but the full orchestra is used in a way which is admirable for its power and pertinence.

With increased opportunities Balfe exhibited increased skill, a spontaneity and an apparent freedom from effort, which many construed into an absence of consideration for the importance of the task undertaken.

There is no *remplissage*, no scamping of work, and no mere use of the cut-and-dried designs of "form" to save trouble. When a motive is introduced a second time it is in such a newness of guise, as variety of key, or change of instrumentation can impart.

The melodies are, like all Balfe's melodies, legitimately vocal, and so natural that once announced they suggest their own sequence. This sequence is often interrupted by the most ingenious contrivances, necessary for the dramatic situations, amply effective, and delightful for the surprise they offer. Never rude or violent.

The concerted music is admirably written. There is a trio for three voices which is in the form of a canon in the unison, sufficiently scientific

to win the hearts of the schoolmen, and sufficiently melodious to charm the ear of the ordinary listener. The whole work justifies its title as a "Grand Opera Seria." Some of the melodies are well known apart from the work in its integrity. "There is Sunlight in heaven," "The Gondolier," "When all around our path," and "We may be happy yet," among others. The fascinating phrases of this last song will perhaps never fail in their attraction. It is stated that the melody as it now stands was an afterthought. At the last rehearsals the original melody to the same words was found to be unsuitable for Harrison's voice. The knowledge of stage effect which had before-time prompted Balfe to substitute a fresh finale for that which he had written for his "Maid of Artois," told him that the song would "go for nothing" as it stood. Harrison also felt this though he did not trouble the composer with the expression of his thoughts, as the melody pleased him. He was therefore not unprepared for a change when Hayward St. Leger, Balfe's faithful satellite, roused him at his lodgings in Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, just as he was retiring.

to bed late at night with the announcement "We may be happy yet." Divining the full meaning which those mysterious words implied, Harrison closed his window, hastily dressed himself, and let the welcome messenger in. They tried the song together, and such an impression did it make upon the singer's mind, that it was sung over and over again "waking the echoes with a strain they were destined to repeat, Heaven knows how often."

A fortnight before the production of "The Daughter of St. Mark," namely, on the 13th of November, the "Bohemian Girl" reached its hundredth night. In those days long runs were exceptional, and such an event was unprecedented. The occasion was marked by an interesting ceremony. A testimonial to the composer was decided upon. A committee was formed of which Sir Henry Webbe, Bart., was president, and Mr. St. Leger secretary. The subscriptions amounted to several hundred pounds, and a very handsome service of plate was made, which was presented to Balfe on the stage at Drury Lane on the 6th of December, the evening of his benefit. Alfred Bunn, who claimed the honour of introducing his works to

the public, now introduced the composer to receive the substantial evidence of his popularity.

Gratified beyond expression at this recognition of his services in the cause of the public, Balfe regarded it as a hopeful sign of the ultimate realization of his great dream of a national opera. It was therefore with a light heart and in a happy frame of mind he went back to Paris to tread, as he thought, the path of success already opened to him. He little knew how or in what manner that path was to be closed to him for one more immediately tempting, a path remarkable not only in his own life but in the history of music.

With the industry and energy characteristic of him, Balfe was working at two operas at this time both intended for production in Paris. Only one of the two, "*L'Etoile de Seville*," was placed upon the stage there. The other, "*The Enchantress*," was to be brought out at Drury Lane, after an English version by Bunn.

The book of "*L'Etoile de Seville*" was written by Hippolite Lucas, his idea being taken from "*La Estrella de Sevilla*," of Lope de Vega.

Balfe regarded the commission to write this work, which he received from the directors of the Grand Opera, as marking one of the most important eras in his life. Not because it was advantageous to him in a financial sense, but because it showed how highly English music, as represented by him, was esteemed. No other English composer had been so favoured before, and subsequent time has told how that none had been held of sufficient importance for acknowledgment beyond their own immediate sphere of action.

For an English musician to be recognised as worthy to rank among the native composers of France, and to have his original works produced at such temples of art as the Opéra Comique and the Grand Opera, was no mean compliment. To be admitted to the boards of the Grand Opera was an honour undreamed of by any but native composers. It is not unusual for directors to make room for the famous masters whose success elsewhere awakens a curiosity to hear their music through the medium of a French translation. It was somewhat out of the ordinary course to invite the representative musician

of a nation said to be unmusical, to furnish the stage with an opera for which they supplied the book. It meant no very great advantage to the composer, for it could not make his work better. It signified a confidence in his power and a desire to admit him to the dignity of a place among those found worthy of being enrolled in the ranks of great musicians. The Grand Opera in Paris was the fount of honour and dignity, and the invitation an avowal of Balfe's worth and merit.

Already his music had enshrined itself in the hearts of his own countrymen. Germany had tried his qualifications by the test of science and invention, and had warmly approved his efforts. France, the first foreign land to admit his originality as was shown in the matter of the additions to "Zingarelli," now placed the crown of laurel on his brow by inviting him to contribute a work for the *répertoire* of what was regarded as the greatest lyrical theatre in the world.

Balfe sold the score of "Le Puits d'Amour" to Bernard Latté for 12,000 francs. This large sum paid to an English composer, represented not only

enterprise but a considerable amount of courage on the part of the French publisher when it is held in view that the press had ridiculed the idea of an Englishman writing an opera for the French stage, and that Auber usually received only 15,000 francs for his operas. The amount paid to Balfe for "*Les Quatre Fils Aymon*" was 12,000, but for "*L'Etoile de Seville*" he obtained 15,000, with 250 francs per night for each work for author's rights.

It was because he appreciated the honour offered to English art in his person that he went to his task with characteristic energy. The opera "*L'Etoile de Seville*," performed by Madame Stolz, Mdlle. Nau, M. Paulin, M. Menghis, Brémond, Gardoni, and Barroilhet, was given for twenty successive nights from the 17th of December, 1845. Contemporary criticism thus speaks of the work:—

"All the artists exerted themselves to the utmost, and displayed as much zeal for a native of Great Britain as they would have done for one of their compatriots. At the conclusion M. Balfe and M. Lucas were called for. After one hearing

only of the work inclination leads us to place 'L'Etoile de Seville' higher in the scale of musical merit than the 'Quatre Fils Aymon,' which was produced at the Opera Comique in 1844."

While "L'Etoile" was still running, Balfe returned to London, and was present at the first performance of Macfarren's fine opera "Don Quixote" at Drury Lane, the theme of which he had suggested. His visit had, however, another object. It was to sign an engagement with Mr. Lumley as conductor of the opera at Her Majesty's Theatre in the place of Signor Costa, who had accepted the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society. The performances of the opera and those for the Philharmonic were attended by the same orchestra. Some misunderstanding arose about the arrangements for rehearsals, which led to the secession of Costa. Balfe had received the invitation to proceed to London while the rehearsals of his opera "L'Etoile" were going on in Paris.

In the peculiar position of affairs at Her Majesty's Theatre some decided action was necessary. The conductor who was to succeed Costa

must be one whose position would secure respect for his appointment. After some consideration it was decided to invite one of three—Spohr, Meyerbeer, and Balfe, the last for preference.

Lumley succeeded in inducing Balfe to apply for a few days leave to go to London from Paris to hear a proposition which would be, it was said, to his advantage.

It was ultimately settled that Balfe should be conductor of the Italian Opera for the season of 1846. His first desire before accepting the appointment was to consult his friend Costa. This did not accord with the views of the committee, and Balfe was asked to hold the matter a secret from all, in case it should militate against the success of the forthcoming season.

The position offered was an important one. He therefore accepted the engagement, signed the pledge to that effect, and returned to Paris. There was no need to invite either Spohr or Meyerbeer. There might be a question as to the popularity of these famous composers when the British public was called upon to recognise either as conductor of Her Majesty's Theatre,

but there could be none about Balfe, who was fully established in the esteem and affection of the public, as he was at that time at the height of his popularity.

Balfe was loyal to his pledge not to divulge anything connected with the engagement he had made. This placed him in a very awkward position with regard to Paris. He was compelled to leave his "Jour de Noël" unfinished, and to break off all his engagements, without being able to assign a satisfactory reason. The cause was explained when the prospectus for the season of 1846 was issued by Mr. Lumley.

CHAPTER XV.

1846—1848.

HER Majesty's Theatre opened on Tuesday, the 3rd of March, 1846, with Verdi's opera "Nino" (Nabucco) for the first time in England. A contemporary notice thus refers to the event: "The perfect satisfaction expressed by the brilliant and crowded audience on Saturday night may be taken as a fiat of approbation from the tribunal to which the munificent lessee looks for support. Were we a gazette of fashion we could occupy half a dozen columns with a list of the noble, wealthy, and otherwise distinguished personages who presided on the occasion; but as we are simply a journal of music and the drama, our readers must tax their imagination to picture a scene such as only the London Italian Opera can present—a scene to which the *prestige* of high rank, the pomp of affluent citizenship, the pride of literary and artistic distinction, and the absorbing influence of female beauty, lend a glow

of splendour, an intensity of excitement, and a variety of interest unparalleled elsewhere. There were matters also connected with the first night of the present season that had been the subject of zealous discussion for weeks previously. Signor Costa, the late admirable director of the orchestra, had resigned his situation and was to be succeeded by Mr. Balfe, a dramatic composer of European fame. The popularity of Signor Costa both with the *habitués* of the opera and with his orchestra was very great. . . . When Mr. Balfe made his appearance, he was received with three spontaneous, enthusiastic, and unanimous cheers, which at once set at rest all anxiety on the matter—and the sequel established his competency for the important post he occupies beyond all possibility of dispute.”

A somewhat severe review of Verdi's opera follows, the gist of which is contained in the sentence “Serious criticism would be thrown away on such a work.” Great care was taken with the mounting, and praise is accorded to Mr. Lumley for having modified the ancient opera *régime* in this respect. “The orchestra under Mr.

Balfe was admirable, so well pleased were the audience that at the end of the opera Mr. Lumley was loudly called for from all parts of the house. Afterwards the same honour was conferred upon Mr. Balfe, who was brought forward by Mr. Lumley, and received with flattering demonstrations of approval."

/ So far all went well, and the season passed off brilliantly. At Her Majesty's Balfe signed an engagement with Lumley for three years, and when the house closed, started off for a holiday in Vienna, where his opera, "Die Vier Haimon's Kinder" (Les Quatre Fils Aymon) was being played. He took with him the book of a new opera, founded, as it was said, on Halévy's "Mousquetaires de la Reine," and intended for the débüt of Mrs. Bishop at Drury Lane in the month of September. He heard his operas, "The Siege of Rochelle" and "The Bohemian Girl," at the Opera House in Vienna.

Later in the year it was reported in the public prints that Jenny Lind, whose brilliant gifts and accomplishments were the theme of admiring comment in musical circles, had accepted an

engagement at the Summer Theatre of Vienna to sing in those operas, as well as in the "Enchantress" and "The Daughter of St. Mark." The Parisians and the Viennese were as enthusiastic for Balfe's music as his own countrymen had been.

Meantime, rumours of the proposed establishment of a second opera speculation at Covent Garden were gaining form and substance, and a semi-official announcement in the *Morning Chronicle* made the world acquainted with the fact that an engagement had been made with Costa, who was to have full powers of control over all the artists engaged for the proposed scheme. The majority of the members of the band of Her Majesty's Theatre had signed with Costa, and Lumley had lost the chiefs of his band and the best of his artists.

Before the season of 1847 commenced, Balfe had a most responsible task. The majority of the fine band of 1846 had transferred their services to Covent Garden Theatre. Balfe had to organize an entirely new orchestra of his own. He accomplished this difficult undertaking with

complete success, as was shown by the performance of "La Favorita" on the opening night of the season of 1847 (16th February). On this occasion Gardoni, the popular tenor from the Grand Opera of Paris, made his first appearance. The orchestra was admirable, the triumph was great.

When all the Philharmonic orchestra left Sterndale Bennett, because Mr. Gye decided to give operas on Mondays, Bennett engaged the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre, which Balfe had trained, and was more than satisfied with their efficiency and obedience.

As a conductor Balfe was second to none. A singer himself, he knew how to accompany singers. He could cover defects, and increase good qualities, by a manner in which Jenny Lind was wont to say no other conductor possessed. His friend and fellow-pupil, R. M. Levey, in his excellent "Annals of the Theatre Royal, Dublin," thus describes his powers in this direction:—

"Several eminent composers have failed in wielding the conductor's bâton, but Balfe possessed all the qualities—great decision, 'an eye to threaten and command,' a faultless ear, ready to

discover the slightest inaccuracy, and, above all, an intelligible and decisive beat, without which all the other attributes are as nothing; indeed, none but the initiated can have an idea of the importance of the movements of the 'small white wand' to those whom it is intended to guide. Much mischief may be done by a moment's distraction on the part of the holder. He may be compared to a skilled 'whip.' He has not only four, but perhaps forty, yea, one hundred 'in hand,' and even a temporary indecision may do much harm. Perhaps no other occupation demands greater 'strain' of brain or steadiness of hand for the time being than that of an operatic conductor. And, as remarked above, many of the greatest composers, from lack of the peculiar talent, have been obliged to 'pass the torch' (bâton) to another for the conduct of their own works. Balfe was 'all there.' Every man under his jurisdiction knew what he meant, and at what part of the bar he might be, so that all went well."

The Italian season of 1846 ended, and there was silence if not rest. Lumley was quietly energetic in one way, and Balfe's old friend Bunn in another.

Each, it appears, was working at the same design, that of inducing Jenny Lind, then making a *furor* on the Continent, to accept an engagement in London. She actually did pledge herself to serve Bunn, and promised to appear at Drury Lane. By this engagement Bunn hoped to make his "blaze of triumph" more sparkling than ever. He had paid Malibran £120 a night; he offered Jenny Lind ten pounds a night more. His courage was sublime. His theatre was limited in its capacities, the prices of admission were comparatively small, and he knew that any attempt to augment them would be strenuously resisted by the public. Continued success alone could reward him for his enterprise. This he hoped to secure by the production of novelty after novelty in breathless succession until he found a means of satisfying the public by the offer of something which should be sufficiently solid and lasting to enable him to pause, rest, and profit by the enjoyment of the fare he placed before them. Bunn wished Balfe to write an opera for Jenny Lind as he had done for Malibran. Jenny Lind did not sing for Bunn, and Lumley paid forfeit to the extent of

£2,500 to secure her services at Her Majesty's Theatre, and the opera was never written. It was part of Balfe's original agreement with Lumley that he should not produce any new work of his own at Her Majesty's Theatre while he held the bâton during the season. There was no limit or restriction to what he might be inclined to do elsewhere, or at another time. The enjoyment of an income which was definite and regular gave him hopes of devoting more time to composition. His operas were not always a source of large profit to him at that time. In most cases they depended upon the run for a certain number of nights. If, as Bunn might say, "coldness or deceit should slight the beauties now they prize, or deem it but a faded light" that burned in the works produced, the chances of remuneration were attenuated proportionately. Balfe was never mercenary in any business transaction. He accepted the market value which was placed upon his works by the publishers, and did not care to load himself with the reproaches of conscience by driving a hard or an unfair bargain with any one. Liberal to a fault in all his dealings, he was apt to

believe that others met him on a like ground. He thus lived joyously, and experienced that happy mental tranquillity which was an essential condition to the production of his works, and a necessity of his mode of existence. A mean-minded man could never have written, much less have conceived, his melodies.

He appreciated to the full the liberality and enterprise of Bunn, and although as a man of culture and of cosmopolitan tastes he must have been aware of his weakness as a poet, he continued faithful to him as a *collaborateur*. He knew that if he could not always write poetically, he could suggest a poetical thought. Moreover he was clever at inventing situations effective on the stage, and favourable to the designs of the composer.

The opera now to be produced was "The Bondman," adapted from the romance by the elder Dumas, "Le Chevalier St. George." The libretto in this case had an origin more immediately relative to the stage in a piece written by Mr. de St. Georges.

Before this was given, the theatre had been

opened for the season of 1846 on the 3rd of October (the genial and accomplished Signor Schira as conductor) with "The Crusaders" of Benedict, to be replaced on the 8th by "The Maid of Artois," Madame Anna Bishop appearing as Isolina; the other parts of the opera were sustained by Miss Rebecca Isaacs (her first appearance), Mr. Burdini, Mr. Borrani, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. Harrison. For this representation Balfe had written a new tenor song, "For thee, and only thee;" a new ballad, "O what a charm it is to dwell;" a new coda to the duet, "O leave me not thus lonely," and also revised the instrumentation.

Madame Bishop's singing was greatly admired by the critics, and the opera was given about thirty times during the season. It was alternated with the "Bohemian Girl," and then was replaced by an opera by Mr. Lavenu, "Loretta, a tale of Seville," which, after running for some five-and-twenty nights, was withdrawn in favour of "The Bondman." The 11th of December was the opening night, and the opera was considered the greatest of Balfe's productions at that time.

“It is written with more care, and is altogether more the work of an artist than any opera we remember from his pen. The *finale* to the second act is exceedingly fine, and leaves nothing to be desired. Any musician might be proud of having written this splendid *morceau*. Among the pieces we would especially notice are a most delicious ballad in the first act, ‘It is not form, it is not face,’ admirably suited to Miss Romer’s voice, and well sung ; a very characteristic buffo song, ‘There is nothing so perplexing,’ given to perfection by Weiss ; and a romance in act third, ‘Love in language,’ as likely to become highly popular. The principal vocalists, including Miss Romer, Messrs. Weiss, Harrison, Harley, and Rafter, acquitted themselves exceedingly well, and merited the applause they received. Mr. Balfe was called for at the end of the second act, and when the curtain fell. He was cheered from every part of the house. We may confidently and conscientiously state that the opera of ‘The Bondman’ is a work of unusual excellence.” Balfe conducted his opera the first night, Signor Schira gracefully yielding his right for the occasion. In addition

to the pieces mentioned by the contemporary critic there are others which the musician of the present, examining the work without being influenced by the prejudices of the time, finds excellent. The hunting choruses, for example, and the unaccompanied quartett, "There is a destiny," are admirably written. The melody, "Child of the Sun," the key melody of the opera, running throughout like a golden thread in the fabric, is also charming in its phrases and dramatic in its design. This melody is employed with the most consummate art. It not only ornaments, but binds together, as it were, and gives meaning to all the rest of the music in the opera. It is a prophecy of the *leit-motiv* of Wagner, but it is differently used. It has often been said by thoughtful and wise musicians that the man who invented the *leit-motiv* deserved well not only of his own nation but of the whole musical world. This honour may be claimed for Balfe. In all his operas, from the very earliest among his productions, his predilection for this form of utterance may be traced. In "The Bondman" it

found amplest expression. The whole of the opera is beautifully designed. The orchestration is written with unusual care, and the effects of sonority and colour are actually well studied and thoughtfully contrived, while they seem to be nothing more nor less than the outcome of an exuberant fancy. The overture, like most of Balfe's preludes, was a *pot-pourri* of airs in the work, but there was this difference, that the opening bars were treated in canonic form, and with the phrases initiated by different qualities of tone in the orchestra.

The opera drew large houses. The dramatic interest of the situations was superior to most of Bunn's productions, and strange to say, that although there are some very curious expressions to be culled here and there from the book of words, such as "iracity, rapacity, voracity," and others which Bunn invented, there are some lines of genuine poetry which no man need have been ashamed of.

Balfe's music further shows the most consummate dramatic power, genuine grip and *verve* in

its phrases, and the existence of the true *vis comica* which few among musicians possessed, or were able to express so happily as he.

His next work, an operetta, "The Devil's In It," was written for Miss Romer and Mr. Harrison for a short season of operatic performances, undertaken in the spring of the year 1847 at the Surrey Theatre. The subject, originally Spanish, was translated into French, and then rendered into English by Charles Coffey in the early part of the 18th century, under the title of "The Devil to Pay." Scribe translated this farce, and Auber set it to music as "La Part du Diable." Balfe altered the title afterwards to "Letty the Basket Maker." This little work, and the opera, "The Maid of Honour"—words by Fitzball—produced by Jullien at Covent Garden Theatre during the time he was lessee, are the only other works of importance which Balfe wrote in 1847. "The Maid of Honour," the same subject as Flotow's "Martha," had for principal artists Miss Birch, Miss Miran, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. Sims Reeves, for whom the tenor part was written, and who made an enormous hit with the ballad, "In this old chair," one

of the most touching and poetical of all the ballads of Balfe. The sympathetic and tender voice of our great tenor found its way direct to the hearts of the hearers. By an oversight on the part of Mr. Forester (Alfred Crowquill), who was one of the managers of Covent Garden Theatre at that time, the customary license from the Lord Chamberlain had not been taken out for the book. This was not discovered until a letter from Mr. John M. Kemblé, the licenser of plays, was received on the morning of the performance. The license was obtained only a few minutes before the doors of the theatre were to be opened.

The minds of all concerned were relieved, and the opera was given, the public knowing nothing of the business which had well-nigh deprived them of the pleasure they greatly enjoyed.

Sims Reeves, as before said, made a great hit with the ballad, "In this old chair," and the composer and author of the libretto were called for at the end of the performance.

Fitzball states in his chatty book, "Thirty-five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life," that Balfe

always considered "The Maid of Honour" his most finished production.

The immortal author of "Pendennis," William Makepeace Thackeray, who was passionately fond of Balfe's music, was present at this performance. He was wont to say that the song, "The heart bowed down," in the "Bohemian Girl," was a tragedy in itself, and the sentiment expressed in the lovely ballad, "In this old chair," in "The Maid of Honour," drew tears from his heart as well as his eyes.

Balfe wrote no new operas for London for a long period. After "The Maid of Honour," his published contributions appear to be limited to a few songs to English and Italian words, the latter including some scenas written for Jenny Lind and Gardoni for the concert tours in 1847 and 1848. In the last-named year he paid a second visit to Dublin, this time as conductor for Mr. Lumley. How Jenny Lind disappointed Bunn, and engaged with Lumley, how the town suffered from Jenny Lind fever, when that charming person and gifted artist appeared, are matters which belong to another department of biography. It

will be enough to say that Balfe was conductor of the opera at Her Majesty's during the whole period of the engagement of the transcendent *prima donna*.

His power of infusing his own spirit and *verve* into the performance by his singers and the band made him one of the best among conductors. His care, knowledge, and intelligence enabled him often to impart a reading to a work superior to that which the composer produced when he directed his own work. This was the case with "Masnadieri," brought out in the second season of his engagement at the opera as conductor. Verdi had been invited by Lumley to direct the opera. He made so poor a hand of it that a *fiasco* seemed imminent. Balfe, at the desire of Verdi, resumed the bâton the second night. As much success as the work was able to win followed, and was gratefully acknowledged by the composer. The success he could get for an author he also gained for a manager. Balfe tided over the difficulties caused by the changes in the *personnel* of the orchestra in 1847, which now included Piatti, Lavigne, and Anglois in its

ranks, and helped to produce that series of operas in which Jenny Lind carried all London captive by her siren strains.

In the season of 1848 Sophie Cruvelli joined the company at Her Majesty's, and among other operas sang in "Le Nozze di Figaro" with Jenny Lind. The result of the experiment proved her to be possessed of fine dramatic talent, and it encouraged her to undertake the more serious *rôle* of "Fidelio" in Beethoven's great opera, produced two years later for the first time on the Italian stage. Recitatives were written by Balfe to the "dialogues" in this masterpiece with so much wit and skill that it is difficult to tell where Beethoven ends or Balfe begins. Not only did Balfe strive to reproduce the chords employed by the great genius whose work he was called upon to adapt, but he also invested his additions with a poetical character. When certain ideas or thoughts are foreshadowed or referred to, Balfe introduced suggestions of the melodies or themes in which Beethoven had conveyed his thoughts. In Leonora's dialogue may be traced the motive of the "Invocation to Hope," and in Rocco's that of the

“Gold Song.” Balfe had done this sort of thing frequently in his own operas, but had called forth no discriminating comment from musicians. The name and purpose of the *leit-motiv* was not recognised in musical art in those days. The device of associating a particular phrase or passage with a particular incident or personage was well known to musicians who wrote. The musicians who judged recognised the value of such an employment of ideas, but they did not find a name for it among the permitted definitions of the Critical Art.

CHAPTER XVI.

1848—1852.

IN the list of operas which Balfe himself drew up, and to which reference has been made, there is a gap of five years between the production of "The Maid of Honour" and "The Sicilian Bride." These years were spent by Balfe in activity, but circumstances were not favourable to the encouragement of English opera. His duties as conductor of Her Majesty's Theatre, and the many engagements which he accepted during the season, kept him fully employed, and so soon as the curtain fell on the last act of the final performance he went away with his family, to enjoy the rest he had earned by his work. Frequently this rest was made only a diversion of labour, for he was called upon to fulfil engagements in one place or another abroad or at home.

Thus in 1846 he spent his holiday in Paris at the invitation of Louis Philippe, the King of the French, who always admired his genius, and

highly estimated his personal character. Of the particulars of this and similar visits there is no certain information.

Balfe kept a diary, but resolutely baffled his future biographers by destroying it regularly at the beginning of a new year. He had also a strong dislike to writing long letters. Those of his communications which exist, are preserved as treasures by his friends, because of their rarity. They are brief, and refer to matters apparently understood between himself and his correspondents; and moreover they are further disappointing as they seldom bear other date than the day of the week.

He was passionately attached to his family, and as he was accustomed always to have them near him, there was no need for him to carry on a correspondence in order to know and to make known how time passed with each other.

Some of his musical sketch books remain, and from them an occasional "light of other days" may be discerned.

Thus it was found that in 1846 he wrote three pieces of music to sacred words for Madame

Adelaide, the sister of the French king. These were to Latin words with orchestral accompaniment. They consist of a solo for bass, "Gratias ago;" a duet for two basses, "Kyrie Eleison," and a trio, "Sanctus," for soprano and two basses. It is known also that about this time he was asked to write a Mass for the service of the Roman Church, but he was not able to begin it.

His friend Mr. Beale, the publisher, offered to find a subject for an oratorio, which he was anxious for him to compose, but Balfe was never willing to undertake work for which he felt he possessed no special qualifications or inclination.

In 1847 and 1848 he remained in England after the opera season, for several months, making a tour in the provinces with Jenny Lind and others, the most triumphant and profitable speculation ever undertaken. In the spare time of the first year he wrote a number of beautiful songs to satisfy the publishers. In his leisure in 1848 he commenced, and all but completed, a new opera to satisfy himself. His musical sketch book reveals that this was begun at Manchester, 12th September, 1848.

The words and names show that the subject of the opera was taken from Victor Hugo's play, "Le Roi s'Amuse," the same source whence Piave, the Italian poet, took the book for Verdi's "Rigoletto." Verdi's opera was produced in 1851, at Venice, so that the honour of priority in the choice of the subject may be claimed for Balfe.

There are no other papers, notes, or references to this work existing. It is therefore impossible to explain why Balfe never finished more than two acts. It may be that his moral nature revolted at the equivocal nature of the subject, and so he abandoned it. The author of the libretto is not stated, but as the sketch book was only intended for private use, there was no need to record matters of which the writer did not think it proper to inform himself. A quotation of a part of the poem may serve to disclose the author's style:—

Weep not, 'twill whelm my heart,
To witness grief like thine,
Which to thy hopes may peace impart,
But only shatters mine.

This is a portion of a duet for Rinaldo, the jester, and his daughter, which, as music, is as powerful

as anything that Balfe ever wrote, and quite as vigorous and as dramatic as the well-known "Tutte le festa," in the like situation in Verdi's opera. The whole seems to be written as a "Grand Opera Seria," with recitations, not dialogue.

The finale to the second act includes an air in E major, the melody of which is the first idea of the beautiful "Power of love," so effectively used afterwards as "Satanella."

The same sketch books show the nucleus of a mass of undated work, particularly interesting to the student of Balfe, and offering by its existence, the clearest proof that his apparently spontaneous effusions were the result of careful thought and labour. In the early pages of one of the books, some of which appear to have been single or detached sheets afterwards bound together, there are no less than four distinct settings of the words "When other lips," in "The Bohemian Girl." These are not only different in rhythm to the published and popular version, but they are in different key. There is also a version of the trio in the last act "See at your feet," more extended than that given in the opera, and finally "The

fair land of Poland" has altogether another melody. The gipsies' chorus was greatly modified before it was considered final, and had the whole of the sketches for the opera been preserved, it is possible that other important changes might have been revealed.

The portions of the unfinished opera spoken of just now prove that Balfe though not represented before the public by any new work, was not allowing his mind to lie fallow as was supposed during these years.

/ In 1849, at the end of the London season, he was invited to visit Berlin by the present Emperor of Germany, then the Prince of Prussia. This was the second time in his life that he had been honoured by so pleasant a command from a foreign potentate; first by the King of the French, now by the heir to the throne of Germany.

Tranquillity had succeeded a period of revolution and disturbance on the Continent. England was not actually involved in rebellion, but it was feared that a rising might take place in London at any time. Prepared for the worst, the director of Her Majesty's Theatre, secretly drilled and armed his

employés to defend the house in case of an attack.

Quiet had been restored, and travelling on the Continent was safe once more. Still the Crown Prince of Prussia had never presented himself to the public, or joined in the world of art, after the insults he had received during the rising in Germany in 1848. He honoured Balfe by being present at the production of "The Bondman" (*Der Mulatte*), at the Grand Opera in Berlin, given under the direction of the composer, who wrote two new pieces of ballet music, "A pas de cinque" and a "Minuet," for Marie Taglioni. The opera was given with as complete a *mise en scène* as could be desired. The performers included the famous Madame Koesler, Herr Manting, and others equally distinguished in the German operatic stage.

The whole of the members of the Royal Family of Prussia were skilled in music, and counted many of Balfe's compositions among their favourite pieces. It was therefore before a sympathetic and appreciative audience that he was called upon to produce one of his best works. A

proof of the appreciation of his efforts was conveyed in the invitation to return during the following year, and superintend the representations of "Die Zigeuneriunn," ("The Bohemian Girl") on the King's birthday. This was done in due time, and the King offered Balfe the decoration of the Prussian Eagle, which, as an English subject, he was compelled to decline.

In several of the provincial theatres in Germany his opera had been given, and to this day more than one of Balfe's compositions are performed on the several German stages, and enjoyed with as great a zest as in his native kingdom.

Balfe returned to London in January, 1850, to conduct a series of "Grand National Concerts" at Her Majesty's Theatre. For this he composed an Overture. This enterprise was managed by a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, but it was not successful. People's minds were running upon the "great world's fair," which was to take place the year following. Musical speculations were not all unprofitable however. During the triumphant concert tour of Jenny Lind in 1849, she had been offered an engagement by a com-

mittee acting through a Mr. Hall, a member of the orchestra at Her Majesty's, to sing at twelve concerts, at the rate of £500 per night. This proved very profitable, and Jenny Lind, to show her high appreciation of the services Balfe had rendered to her during her engagement at the opera, and upon the tours, before she went to America, volunteered to sing for him *gratis* at a concert in London. She managed the whole affair herself, and the concert given at Exeter Hall at the end of the month of January, 1850, realized £1,700, an amount never equalled before or since in the building. /

The year of the "Great Exhibition" saw the production of both variety and novelty at the opera in the Haymarket, "Gustavus III.," "Masaniello," and "L'Enfant Prodigue" of Auber, "Florinda," by Thalberg, for which the publishers paid £2,000, the largest sum ever given at that time for an Italian opera in England, and "Fidelio" for the first time on this stage with Sophie Cruvelli and Sims Reeves in the principal parts. For this opera Balfe wrote the recitatives alluded to on page 196, and which are always given when the

work is played in Italian in England. All these were conducted by Balfe in a manner which called forth the most enthusiastic praise from the public, the artists, and even from the manager. The prisoner's chorus in "Fidelio," had the advantage of the assistance of all the principal male artists, Gardoni, Calzolari, Pardini, Massol, Ferranti Lorenzo, and F. Lablache, at the request of Balfe, to do honour to this great work. The season was further marked by a sensation scene appropriate to the period, thus described by Mr. Lumley. "After a brilliant performance of the 'Muta di Portici,' the curtain rose upon a well-devised scene of the monster 'Crystal Palace' (the first of that illustrious species) and the surrounding landscape of Hyde Park. An 'occasional ode,' composed by Balfe, the conductor, heralded the symbolical congress of 'peace and goodwill' among nations."

The music of this pageant, which included "Characteristic dances," was not the only work besides ballads which Balfe wrote in this year. He wrote a cantata for female voices with Italian words, for Signor Puzzi's benefit, on May 26th.

The accompaniments included a horn part for Puzzi, a harp part for Labarre, and a pianoforte part which he played himself. The singers—Sontag, Sophie Cruvelli, and Fiorentini, were each provided with music suited to their powers, and strove in friendly rivalry to outshine each other, and to do justice to Balfe's music. Labarre was a pupil of Boiëldieu, and with Adolphe Adam wrote the "Allegro" to the overture "La Dame Blanche." The introduction and the coda were written by the master.

As the season reached the end, the members of the orchestra presented Balfe with a magnificent silver salver, as a testimony of their admiration not only for his genius, but for his never-varying kindness and consideration for all in the theatre, from the highest to the lowest.

He enjoyed one triumph more in the favourable reception given to "Les Quatre Fils Aymon," in a new guise. Mr. Lumley in his "Reminiscences of the Opera," thus tells the story of the production. "Another event, however, was still to come. For the benefit of the conductor, Mr. Balfe, was performed, for the first time on the Italian stage,

that genial composer's opera, 'Les Quatre Fils Aymon,' under the title of 'I Quattro Fratelli.' It was first produced at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and met with much success. It was equally admired in its English form when given at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of Mr. Maddox, as 'The Castle of Aymon.'" But it was always in Germany that it enjoyed its greatest popularity. First produced at Vienna, it quickly visited every capital city and town in Germany, and was everywhere received with enthusiasm. To this day it remains a "stock opera," and every military band still executes, on all available occasions, the favourite melodies of "Die vier Haimon's Kinder." "Perhaps," writes Mr. Lumley, "there is no one of Mr. Balfe's many operas which abound so much in lively, spirited, and at the same time original melodies, as this happy inspiration. Owing to the composer's ingenious blending of the two characters of Italian and French styles of composition into a style that may be called *per se* 'Balfean,' this tuneful work lost nothing of its original effect when transferred to the Italian stage. The music may even be said

to have acquired a fresh beauty from being conveyed to the audience in the Italian tongue. Comic *verve* and dramatic *esprit* were preserved, while the countless melodies of the work gained in mellifluous fluency. Sophie Cruvelli, aided by Gardoni, Pardini, Coletti, and Massol, secured a most effective and spirited execution for the work of their friend and fellow-artist; and Mr. Balfe earned on the occasion of his benefit, a great and legitimate triumph."

The "Musical World" gives an account of the performance, of which the following is a condensation:—

"The production of Balfe, Comic Opera, 'Le Quatre Fils Aymon,' and in the Italian title of 'I Quattro Fratelli,' for the benefit of the composer was an event of more than ordinary interest. Messrs. Leuwen and Brunswick never invented a more ingenious and amusing libretto; Balfe never wrote music more lively, untiring, and vivacious. It is not necessary to enter into details, since none of our readers can have forgotten the adventures of the four sons, who, left penniless by their father, Duke Aymon, through the wit and spirit of the

enchanting Erminia, daughter of Baron Beau-
nanoir the Stingy, get wives and fortunes; the
lucky Olivier obtaining the hand and heart of
Erminia, while the three brothers are united to
her three cousins, each fairer than her neighbours.

“Such an Erminia as Cruvelli was enough to
make the success of an opera of less merit than
that of Balfe. A more elegant, brilliant yet dash-
ing piece of comedy was never seen. Every one
of the three costumes suited Cruvelli to admira-
tion; indeed in this particular, it could be difficult
not to suit her, since she suits every dress so well,
that the dress must needs look handsome that
she wears. In every scene Cruvelli was the life
and soul of the action. She was quicksilver; and
yet, in the midst of her incessant movement,
everything she did was graceful, natural, and
easy. She had already proved herself a tragedian
in *Fidelio* and *Norma*; in *Erminia* she came out
as a sterling comedian.

“The other characters were well filled. Gar-
doni was delightful as Olivier, and never sang
with more taste and feeling. He gave the charm-
ing ballad ‘*Gia tarda e nera,*’ a gem in its way,

to admiration. Madame Giuliani was excellent as Clara. A new Cavatina, 'Tutti ben riusciti,' composed for her by Balfe, and sung in the most artistic and satisfactory manner, was one of the hits of the evening. The parts of the two other cousins, Islande and Eglantina, were played by Mdles. Feller and Lanza. Ricardo, Allardo, and Rinaldo, three of the four brothers Aymon, received full justice at the hands of Signori Perdini, Mercuriali, and Balanchi, and Signor Coletti was perfect as the major-domo Ivon. Balfe was applauded at each act. At the conclusion Cruvelli came forward alone at the unanimous call of the house; and to sum up, Balfe was led on by Gardoni, and cheered to the echo."

He left London for Vienna to enjoy a still greater triumph. The director of the new Theatre der Wieder, Herr Pokorny, proposed to open his season with "The Bohemian Girl," which had been very profitable to him the year before. He had engaged the famous Jetty Treffz and Herr Staudigl to strengthen the cast, and the happy thought occurred to him to invite the composer to conduct three performances at a *honorarium* of

1,000 francs a night. This proved so great a success that the engagement was extended to twelve nights, at the same rate. The theatre was crowded on each occasion, and Balfe the only English composer the Germans had ever seen, was welcomed with the most extraordinary enthusiasm. The German public had conceived the idea that Balfe was an English composer of the last generation. They judged that his music exhibited too much science and learning to have been produced by any writer then living. When he appeared in person they took him for the "son of the composer of the 'Bohemian Girl,' and were astonished to find that one so young-looking was so old in their estimation, and the discovery of their own disappointment only increased the excitement with which they received him." / Pokorny signalised the event by inviting the distinguished representatives of art and letters to a banquet in honour of Balfe, at the conclusion of his engagement. On which occasion also, he presented the composer with a splendid service of plate, as a testimony of his gratitude and appreciation. The artists, on their part, gave him a gold bâton, on

which the names of all his operas then known were engraved.

While this happy scene was enacted within, a scene no less flattering to the composer or significant of the estimation in which his genius was held was inaugurated without. Herr Strauss, the father of the three world-famed brothers, brought his band to perform a selection of pieces from several of Balfe's operas. The veteran delivered a harangue in the best English he could muster, and alluding to the personal admiration he felt at being able to make the acquaintance of one whose works he admired in common with all his countrymen who had heard them, embraced Balfe, and metaphorically crowned him as "The King of Melody," a title by which he was afterwards addressed, not only in Germany but at home.

CHAPTER XVII.

1852—1858.

DURING the time of his second visit to Berlin, one evening at the residence of Prince Charles, the Crown Prince suggested to Balfe that he should visit St. Petersburg, and try his artistic fortune there. He promised to make the way easy by addressing a letter to the Empress, and Balfe, ever grateful, and ever adventurous, determined at the close of the "dismal season" to seek "fresh fields and pastures new."

Before starting he had delivered up the score of his opera "The Sicilian Bride," the only work of importance which had flowed from his pen for five years. The book written by Alfred Bunn, on the basis of a play by Saint Georges, was the last which the immortal author of the "blaze of triumph" gave to Balfe. It was produced at Drury Lane on the 6th March, 1852, with Miss Crichton, Miss Isaacs, Miss P. Horton, Mr. Sims Reeves, Mr. Whitworth and Mr. Henry Drayton. With his

wife and daughter Victoire, Balfe started for Dantzic on a visit to his son-in-law, Max Behrend, the husband of his eldest daughter, Louise. Max Behrend's sister was the wife of the charming composer, Curschmann, and the united talents of those gathered together at this period, in this place, afforded the means for the enjoyment of many happy hours.

From Dantzic they proceeded to St. Petersburg in M. Behrend's travelling carriage. They were nine nights and eight days performing the journey, and were wearied and worn beyond measure when they entered the good city of St. Petersburg. After a few days' sojourn in an hotel, they were invited by Mr. Michele, who was formerly the Editor of the *Morning Post*, and now held the office of Consul-General, to remain as his guests.

Balfe delivered the letters with which he had been furnished by the Royal family of Prussia, but he had to wait for his reception for some time—nearly two months—in consequence of the Court being in mourning for the Duke of Leichtenberg. That period having passed, he was invited to conduct the Court concert given at the residence of

the Grand Duchess Helen. The Grand Duke Constantine presented Balfe to the Empress, who greeted him as an old friend as "M. Balfe, de l'air." The air being the finale to the "Maid of Artois," originally written for Malibran, but which had been made familiar to the Court by the singing of Alboni and Pauline Viardot.

During his stay at St. Petersburg Balfe gave two concerts in the Salle de Noblesse, with the assistance of Mesdames Viardot, Caradori, Garcia, Mario, Demeric and Signori Tamberlik, Mario, Debassini, Romani and Lablache. By desire of the Royal Family, who attended these concerts, the greater part of the programme was made up of a selection from his own compositions, including "Le Postiglione," which he sang and accompanied himself in his own marvellous style.

His geniality and readiness made him many friends. In one of his letters, written at the time, he says, "I have done splendidly here. The Russians have positively taken a fancy to me, and I have all the prettiest women in St. Petersburg as pupils. I shall come back here next season, of course. The Empress herself has had the good-

ness to request me to return. I really cannot speak in too high terms of *all* the Imperial family ; I am spoiled by them, and, what is almost better, have received splendid presents.”

Balfe did not return the next season, for the Crimean war broke out, and his second visit to Russia was not made until some years after. On his way back to England he stopped at Vienna to produce “*Keolanthé*,” at the Imperial Theatre, which proved a great success. From Vienna he went to Trieste, further lengthening the time of his absence from home by a sojourn in Italy. At Trieste the “*Bohemian Girl*” as “*La Zingara*,” was performed in the month of December, and very soon with the wandering propensities of the tribe to which she belonged, did she “find a home somewhere” very quickly. In Bologna, the scene of former pleasant memories, in Brescia and in Bergamo was the fascinating dream of “*La Zingara*” fully admitted. These performances offered a gratifying proof of the sympathy of feeling between the English artist and the Italian people, and they awakened a desire in the mind of the representative Italian musician and publisher,

Ricordi, to include Balfe's name in his archives. He therefore offered him a commission to write an opera for Trieste. Balfe chose a book compiled by F. M. Piave upon a subject suggested by himself with the title of "Lo Scudiero." This was completed but never performed.

Piave was an Italian poet of high merit but of lugubrious fancy. He had made a special study of Victor Hugo's dramas, and delighted in translating into Italian those with gloomy endings.

He sent another book to Balfe called "Pittore e Duca." The subject was, as far as could be told, original. The poet's peculiar fancy had, however, conceived an ending to the opera in perfect agreement with that which had hitherto satisfied Verdi, for whom he had written several *libretti*. In this opera, produced in September, 1856, Balfe had written some of his best dramatic and most original music. The success of the whole was most exciting but the final scene, with its tragic ending, was changed after the first night and the opera was made to end happily.

The finale was altered by Saint Georges, Balfe's old friend and literary *collaborateur* in Paris, and

this modified version was translated by the present writer into English some years later, and performed at Her Majesty's Theatre by the Carl Rosa Opera Company, in January, 1882, by the name of "Moro, the Painter of Antwerp." It was well received, several of the pieces being encored by an enthusiastic audience. There is some very fine music in this opera. The introduction is striking and new. The finale to the second act is especially well written. There are three arias for tenor of unusual freshness and charm. The baritone songs are vigorous and well laid out for the voice, and the soprano music, based upon the Italian models, is brilliant and florid. The choral writing, as instanced in the chorus of judges, and a chorus for students, is excellent, and the scoring is full of colour and character. Altogether it is an interesting example of the composer's thoughts at that period. The *Daily Telegraph*, in a long and appreciative notice of the opera, after the performance at Her Majesty's Theatre, singles out for special praise several of the numbers. The first act proper contains a song, "Is it then in vain I've waited,"

illustrative of Balfe's purest melodic style, as well as the care with which, when in proper mood, he could ably wed the tone to the words. With this may be bracketed Olivia's air in the convent scene, "As by the river straying." Portions of the duet for Olivia and Alba are marked by strong dramatic purpose. The musical interest of the second act fairly begins with Moro's song, "Farewell thoughts of joy and gladness." Here the well-known Balfe melody asserts itself, and the audience gave it all the welcome implied in a vociferous encore. A like reception awaited the Duke's air, "Bold knight, his armour wearing," which is also in the composer's best vein. In the third act attention is challenged by some capital concerted pieces for the sailors and people, and by charming dance music of a Spanish character. In agreeable sequence comes a duet for the lovers, opening with a slow movement, only to be described as, in its way, a gem; but the attraction of the duet is surpassed by the real beauty of Moro's barcarolle, "On my gondola so lonely." No number, perhaps, has a better chance of taking just honours than this

song, which, with its lively choral refrain, appeals irresistibly to all who have any soul for fresh and spontaneous tune.

Madame Valleria performed the part of Olivia, and when the Opera was repeated in London and in the country, Miss Georgina Burns added greatly to her reputation by her singing and acting in the part. Miss Guilia Warwick was Ines, Mr. Barton McGuckin, was Moro the Painter, Mr. Leslie Crotty was the Duke, Mr. Dudley Thomas, was Vargas, and Mr. Hervet D'Egville, the Ambassador Orsini.

The vocal score was issued by the house of Messrs. Cramer and Co., the house which, in 1835, had printed Balfe's "Seige of Rochelle;" and the Queen, with her customary gracious kindness, accepted the dedication of the opera.

Balfe visited several places in Italy in the year 1856. Turning homewards he rested at Paris, where he wrote a "Concert Overture," dated "January, 1857," which is full of spirit and fire. It was performed by Padeloup in later years with success, and was given once or twice in London. When Balfe reached the British metropolis he found that another attempt had been made to

establish a National Opera in consequence of the outcry for the support of native talent which was made in the public prints of the time.

It was during this year that the musical world hailed with delight the publication of "six songs and a duet," which Balfe had composed to words by the American poet Longfellow. They were written at Dantzic during a short stay with his son-in-law, M. Behrend, on his way home from St. Petersburg. Published by Boosey, they met with a most favourable reception. An enormous number of copies were sold in a remarkably short period. Up to this time the poems of Longfellow were scarcely read or known in England. Balfe's selection of words attracted attention to the poet who had written them, and awakened a demand for his works. Musicians of all degrees of talent followed the lead given, and poured forth a flood of "Longfellow settings." The poet himself, grateful for the popularity which his verses had gained in England through Balfe's genius, wrote a letter expressing the pleasure he had received through his music, and invited Balfe to visit him at his home in America. He promised

him a reception in that country which his talents merited. About the same period also, General Morris, the author of "Woodman spare that tree," and several other poems which had become known in England, sent to Balfe a magnificent copy of his works, accompanied by a letter stating that if he found any of the poems worthy of setting nothing would give him greater pleasure than to have his name associated with that of the composer of the immortal "Bohemian Girl," who by this time had wandered not only all over the United States but also into the chief colonies. Balfe was asked to accompany Jenny Lind to America in 1850, but was not able to make arrangements for a visit to that country. He often longed to sojourn among a people who had received his works with the greatest favour, and who would doubtless have given him a cordial welcome.

He was not forgotten by the public of London. He announced a performance of "The Bohemian Girl," with other attractions, for his benefit at Drury Lane in the month of July. He was assisted by Miss Arabella Goddard, the foremost English pianist of her time, by Miss Dolby, Madame Viardot

Garcia, Messrs. Gassier, Weiss, and Sims Reeves. The performance was a brilliant success, and the composer was received with cordial and affectionate welcome from the audience. In all other respects Balfe's muse was silent this year.

In the closing months of 1857, Mr. Harrison and Miss Louisa Pyne entered into partnership. Their object was to establish a national opera in English. They were well supported by a committee of subscribers, and opened the Lyceum Theatre with high hopes and expectations. They gave operas in English, "The Huguenots," "Crown Diamonds," etc. The performances were successful artistically, but the public did not flock to the theatre in such numbers as to make the venture prosperous financially. With shrewd and practical knowledge the partners believed that if they could keep the theatre open long enough, the public would in time support the undertaking. Day by day gloom settled thicker and closer over and around them, until it was felt that an undertaking intended to be national must be promoted by other means than the production of foreign works. Balfe was invited to write an

opera. The magic of his name seemed to revive the fortunes of the house, and his sunny presence to dispel the gloom. When the opera was only announced the attendance became improved, as though people were anxious not to lose sight of the faintest blush of the ray which might bring light and prosperity. When the opera was finished and produced, the house was not large enough to hold the people who wished to hear it. The opera was "The Rose of Castille." Twice at least before had Balfe saved the fortunes of a theatre by his efforts. Once again was his music to replenish the exhausted treasury, and to fill men's minds and hearts with a grateful flood of incomparable melody. The *libretto* of this new opera was constructed by Mr. Augustus Harris, the stage manager, and Mr. Edward Falconer, a dramatic writer of some power. The groundwork was "Le Muletier de Toledo," which had obtained some little success when produced in Paris on the 18th May, 1849, and to which Adolph Adam had set some charming music.

Balfe completed his opera in thirty days, working at night, as was his wont, between the hours

of eleven and three. He seemed to be more nervous about the success of this than any of his former works. He knew that the artists of the theatre had consented to remain on half-salaries until the production of his opera. If it proved to be a failure his mortification would be doubly increased.

Public expectation had been raised to a high pitch in anticipation of a renewal of those pleasures which Balfe's pen never failed to excite. For all these reasons he took particular pains with his work, and hoped for the best. His own apprehension is expressed in the words, "My new opera, 'The Rose of Castille,' comes out to-night. If one could judge by the rehearsals, we have every chance of a great success. *Nous verrons.*"

The opera was produced on the 29th of October, 1857.

The singers, Miss Louisa Pyne, Miss Susan Pyne, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. George Honey, exerted themselves to the utmost to do justice to music which had been arranged to show to the best advantage the capacities and accomplishments of all. Balfe was happy when he could write to his

family at Paris after the performance—"Great success. I was called out after each act, and received in a most enthusiastic manner."

The opera had an enormous run. On the hundredth night of its repetition, the author appeared upon the stage at the call of the audience, and "wreaths, flags, bouquets, baskets of flowers, all the prescribed paraphernalia of enthusiasm rained upon the stage." It ran for nearly two seasons, first at the Lyceum and afterwards at Drury Lane, when the Pyne and Harrison Company transferred their venture to the larger house.

In this work the experts observed that Balfe's scoring was especially worth attention and remark. It was not the humming of a big guitar, but "a series of masterly bits of kaleidoscopic colouring, helping the form and yet charming the senses with surprising combinations of appropriate hues." "The muleteer's song," "The convent cell," "'Twas rank and fame," the trio "I'm not the Queen," are the brightest among the gems which sparkle throughout the opera. Balfe's powers had

gained in solidity, and the influence of his melodies over the public mind was as great as ever.

Another fact worth noting was the production of "The Bohemian Girl" during the first experimental winter season at Her Majesty's Theatre, in Italian as "La Zingara." Piccolomini, Alboni, Giuglini, and Beletti were the representatives of the chief parts. Balfe converted the dialogue into recitative, and made the whole homogeneous for the Italian stage. Giuglini's singing of "Then you'll remember me," in the Italian brought with it a pleasure never to be forgotten by those who heard it. The lessee, Mr. Lumley, was so delighted with the result, that he presented Balfe with a cheque for fifty pounds; a sum considerably in excess of what was due as "author's rights."

While the season continued, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, the eldest daughter of our gracious Queen, was married to the Crown Prince of Prussia. The Queen and the Prince Consort, in commanding the performances at the theatres to celebrate the occasion, signified the interest they had always shown in native music as

represented by Balfe, by commanding a performance of "La Zingara" at Her Majesty's, and of "The Rose of Castille" at the English Opera. The Prince Consort further expressed his great approval of the last-named work by ordering over fifty copies of the scores to be sent as presents to his friends in Germany. The published copy was dedicated to the most noble the Marchioness of Downshire.

Once more did Balfe renew the triumph he had gained in times gone by. First with "The Siege of Rochelle," next with the "Bohemian Girl," and now with "The Rose of Castille." Each marked an epoch in his life, and showed the mental progress he had made. Each work possessed the characteristic qualities which distinguished his music among that of all others of his contemporaries. Each later Opera compared with its predecessor presented unmistakable signs of development in thought and treatment. The last placed side by side with the first made the artistic contrast the more striking. In all these was the expression of the heaven-born power of melody with which he was so greatly endowed. The maturity of ex-

perience lent force to his fancy, and brought improvement with increasing years. Of those which represented his intermediate labours, it might be said "that the music fell upon the ear like a revelation, and upon art with the power of a revolution."

"Satanella" proved another positive triumph for the composer. The ingenuity of the story, albeit the introduction of certain characters, Arimanes for instance, was freely commented upon, and admitted on all sides. The style was that of the grand opera, and the music was delightful. The chief air for "Satanella" "The power of love," which permeates the whole work, and forms the guiding theme of the opera, was quickly caught up, and spread through the town. It made as great a sensation as "The light of other days" had done two-and-twenty years before, though it must be acknowledged that a great share of the interest was due to the exquisite singing of the most accomplished English prima donnas, Miss Pyne, "the first among them all."

The instrumentation was vigorous, the effects were novel, the musical ideas were striking and powerful. The "go" in the dramatic action and

the grace and charm of the accompaniments, and the ballet music were greatly admired. "The convent cell" another beautiful ballad, gained much charm by the sweetness and purity of Miss Pyne's singing. The opera was played the whole season.

In 1859 Mr. Henry Littleton, who had succeeded to the business of Novello and Co., gave Balfe the commission to edit a collection of Moore's Irish Melodies, and to supply introductory symphonies and accompaniments. It may be almost needless to say that a subject so congenial was treated by Balfe in the happiest mood. Every one of these ballads so set is a gem in itself, and the reverence paid to the traditional form of the melodies was in all respects commendable. There was no alteration of a note or passage to make it conformable to a passing fancy, and no change of a phrase to fit the sequence of harmonies. Balfe, by his treatment of these songs showed himself not only a scientific but a conscientious musician, "uniting in his person the qualities of musicianship and national sensibility imperatively demanded for such a task."

CHAPTER XVIII.

1858—1865.

“LA ZINGARA” was among the greatest attractions of the season at Her Majesty’s Theatre in 1858, the last which was to be under the rule of Mr. Lumley, and “was received with a triumph which had never been exceeded, even in the days of the Catalani.”

Balfe visited the provinces on a prosperous tour in this year, and returned to London to be present at the rehearsals of “Satanella,” the book of which had been concocted by Messrs. Harris and Falconer. It was produced at Covent Garden Theatre the 20th December, 1858, the first work given on that stage during the time that the Pyne and Harrison Company held the theatre, “their fortune improved by the triumphs of ‘Satanella.’”

Once more did Balfe make “a journey due north” to the Russian capital with his daughter Victoire. What followed is but told in his own words, part of a letter written the 26th March,

1860, to an old friend—"I am going to give you a little news that will surprise you, and I am sure that you will be pleased to hear that my darling child Victoire is to be married to an ambassador at the Court, Sir John F. Crampton, at the end of this week, and her mother and your old friend the father return home childless! Well, now both my girls are well provided for, and I am a happy old gentleman. You will also be glad to hear that the Court here have expressed their satisfaction, and my girl has an audience of the Grand Duchess Constantine, to receive her felicitations."

While Balfe was in Russia his opera "Satanella" was "drawing crowded houses" at home. Some ballads he had written for Sims Reeves and others were charming the public ear in the concert rooms. One called "Margaretta," the words of which had been selected by him from General Morris's book, a contemporary writer describes as "one of those catching trifles which Mr. Balfe in his happiest moments, is so lucky in producing, . . . the whole, too, essentially *singable*, can hardly fail to be effective, and charm all ears, no matter

of what dimensions, and reach all hearts from the softest to the least easily penetrable."

At the end of October, 1860, Covent Garden was opened with "The Rose of Castille," and "the work was never received with greater favour." An English version of Victor Massé's opera "Le Noces de Jeannette" held the stage for a short time until it was replaced by another new opera by Balfe entitled "Bianca the Bravo's Bride." The words were by Palgrave Simpson, who followed Matthew Gregory Lewis, commonly called "Monk Lewis," pretty closely, in the lines of his story, but with such an amount of poetical feeling as might be expected from so experienced a dramatist. This opera was placed upon the stage on the 6th of December, 1860. It was spoken of almost in the phraseology of Bunn who died at Boulogne the week after the performance, as another glorious triumph for English opera—another hope for national music. "Mr. Balfe's new opera was one of the most legitimate successes ever witnessed within the walls of a theatre."

The *Times* in a short notice which appeared on the day following the performance, thus speaks—

“A grand romantic opera in four acts, abounding in complicated music, built upon a story that embodies a great variety of incidents, and written throughout with an evidently serious purport, cannot in fairness be dismissed after a single hearing. Such an opera is the long and anxiously expected new work of Mr. Balfe, who for upwards of twenty years has been the most popular of our native composers for the stage, and who last night, added another to his long list of successes. His ‘Bianca the Bravo’s Bride,’ is framed more ambitiously than any of his latter productions, and for that reason demands and invites stricter attention. We shall therefore be satisfied at present with announcing its enthusiastic reception by a crowded house. The composer was twice summoned before the curtain, and again appeared a fourth time leading Mr. Alfred Mellon, who had well earned the compliment by the ability and labour he must have bestowed in preparing what was an admirable representation, even for this theatre, where imperfect first night representations form the exception, rather than as is too frequently the case, the rule. It may as well be stated that

'Bianca' is founded upon the well-known romance of 'Rugantino, or the Bravo of Venice,' also once familiar as a melodrama, and that Mr. Palgrave Simpson has turned the original materials into an operatic libretto with the tact and judgment of an experienced hand. Nearly every member of the company is engaged in the distribution of characters, which are so numerous that Mr. Balfe has been able to accommodate as many as six basses and baritones—Messrs. Wharton, Lawrence, Kelly, Wallworth, Corri and Distin—with more or less conspicuous parts. Mr. Harrison represents the mysterious and formidable bravo—

Like Cerberus, three gentlemen in one.

Miss Louisa Pyne, whose singing from end to end was a model of finished and brilliant execution, the Princess distinguished by his tender solicitude; Mr. St. Albyn, a comic second tenor; and the promising Miss Thirlwall, a maid of honour somewhat advanced in years. To conclude, scenery, costumes, and a more than usually animated ballet, all effectively combined to lend attraction to the spectacle. The star of English

opera is clearly in the ascendant." Wallace, Frank Mori, Benedict, Loder, Howard Glover, and Macfarren were all represented through their works on the stage at the same period, either actually or prospectively, and the success achieved, by many was held to point to a bright future for English art. "Formerly an opera—by which is not intended a mere ballad opera—for the pen of an English composer, was regarded in some sort as a phenomenon; but it would appear from what is now on hand that our musicians have progressed with the times."

All this was unquestionably owing to Balfe, the honours he had won at home and abroad had awakened the emulation of his contemporaries. Where an Englishman had succeeded, Englishmen might also tread the path of prosperity.

No one was happier than Balfe to mark this advance. He had said in years gone by, that the only hope of establishing an English national opera upon permanent grounds was to encourage young artists to produce works. The success of one would strengthen the ground for those who were to follow. When the opportunity existed there is

never likely to be any lack of aspirants to seize it. Everything in those days depended upon an individual venture. Had Balfe not applied the means of raising the fortunes of the English opera company by his "Satanella," the whole speculation would have collapsed and another failure to establish English art must have been registered. The favourable reception given to Balfe's opera encouraged others to raise their drooping heads and take heart of courage.

The Pyne and Harrison Company would prosper so long as matters attractive were offered to the public. But the public is capricious, and cannot be always commanded to admire those things by which the *entrepreneur* hopes only to make money. A thousand reasons might be advanced to explain the cause of failure where success was desired and expected. But reasons, though they be "as plentiful as blackberries," will not fill the treasury, and it is necessary that some other guarantee against failure should be supplied. There is no arrangement in this country which admits of a subvention being granted to support theatrical or musical entertainments. Everything is left to

private enterprise. If English opera appeared to be successful under the *régime* of the Pyne and Harrison Company it was because the works given were attractive to the public, and the managers were careful to place them upon the stage in a manner fit for public acceptance. Balfe's operas had turned the fortunes of more than one venture. They were usually attractive and remunerative. It was therefore not surprising that the directors of the English Opera should make an earnest endeavour to secure the services of the greatest among English opera writers, and provide for a succession of works during their tenure of the theatre. A new arrangement made with Mr. Gye for the use of the theatre for three years, suggested the offer to Balfe of an engagement for a like period.

Balfe undertook to supply three original English operas, in the month of October in the three successive years 1861, 1862 and 1863. For the acting right, singing or acting—for three years, for each opera he was to receive three hundred pounds, one half to be paid on the 20th of October, the remainder on the day after the first performance. A

further sum of one hundred pounds was to be given for an extension of the right for two years more if claimed. The managers were to supply the opera book. All this arrangement was independent of any bargain that Balfe might make for the publication of his music. For each opera he had now obtained a thousand pounds.

Besides the works which Balfe wrote, the Pyne and Harrison Company produced several new operas by William Vincent Wallace, Henry Leslie, and Alfred Mellon their conductor.

The first opera written by Balfe for Covent Garden, under this engagement was "The Puritan's Daughter." It was produced on the 30th of November, 1861, and met with great and instant success. It pleased the public and the judges, and is even now regarded as one of the most masterly works that Balfe had ever written.

The author of the libretto Mr. J. V. Bridgeman had done his work well and effectively. He was experienced in the dramatic science, and was well skilled in the art of making smooth, effective and vocal verse. The story selected was good, and Balfe was in the happiest vein in his setting.

The overture is one of the most striking of all Balfe's compositions. It is graceful in its form, and fresh and powerful in the instrumentation. Every other portion of the music was intensely dramatic, and was so arranged that it was independent of spectacle or scenic effects. It was also noteworthy as being the second, and not as was stated at the time, the first of Balfe's operas as a purely English theme—the first was "Catherine Gray." From a musical point of view it was further memorable as showing a departure from the method previously adopted in operas, inasmuch as the tenor parts were kept entirely in the background and the chief music for the lover was assigned to a baritone, not by accident, but by design. This baritone part brought its representative Mr. Santley considerably to the front in public favour, and strengthened the reputation he had earned in other works both as an actor and as a singer.

Messrs. Harrison, St. Albyn, Wallworth, Honey, Corri and Patey with Miss Pyne sang in this opera, and the public flocked nightly to hear its melodious strains and to enjoy the fine dramatic

interest the situations offered. The *Daily Telegraph* of that date, thus spoke of the work :—

“The success of Mr. Balfe’s new opera which after the first performance was characterised as ‘indisputable,’ becomes more and more decided with each successive representation. The work contains every element of popularity. The story is interesting, the dialogues amusing, the verses elegantly written, the melodies striking, original, and characteristic, the concerted pieces, though comparatively few in number, invariably well constructed; while the choruses though still less numerous, are equally dramatic and effective.”

When transplanted to America it excited an extraordinary sensation, even though the poetical finish of the first act was destroyed by the introduction of a vulgar finale which was impertinently concocted by the conductor and the performers. This happily did not destroy the attraction of Balfe’s music nor diminish his fame. A large number of American copies of the songs were sold, and the publishers reaped a great profit from the sale. Thanks to the international arrangements

as regards copyright, Balfe never derived anything more than an artistic benefit from his popularity in America. It is true that he was invited to make a journey to that appreciative country, to enjoy advantages more substantial than empty honour, but he never went. After his death Mr. Pond paid his widow £300 for the right to print "*Il Talismano*" in America, and this was the only financial recognition of Balfe's merit received from the great country, where his operas and songs were as well known and as welcome as they were in the several European cities.

Balfe never complained of this, never alluded to the want of understanding between the two nations, he was perfectly well acquainted with the state of things nearer home. International copyright, as it existed, was practically a dead letter, and the cost of recovering penalties from foreign appropriators not only would have deterred him from taking any action in the matter, if he had been so disposed, but would have been altogether strange to his nature and disposition.

The cantata "*Mazeppa*" was begun by Balfe some time in this year, 1861. His mind may have

been interested in scenes of Russian adventure, and if it was so, no better story would recommend itself to his attention. The book was written by Miss Jessica Rankin, the authoress of several songs to which Balfe had set music.

The cantata was performed in the month of June, 1862, at Exeter Hall, with Madame Sherington, Madame Dolby, Mr. Sims Reeves, and Mr. Santley as the chief singers. It was proposed to introduce it into one of the programmes of the Birmingham Festival of the autumn of 1861, but this proposition was not carried out. After the first performance the whole of the band parts and the score mysteriously disappeared, and have not been recovered to this day.

The cantata contains some of Balfe's best music. The opening chorus "Fill high" is full of power and vigour. The air for soprano "I dreamed I had a bower so fair" is a gem of melody, the duet following, soprano and contralto, and Mazeppa's song "She walks in queen-like grace," are fit to match with anything Balfe ever wrote. The chorus "Revenge" is well conceived and carried out, and the parting duet soprano and

tenor, "Ah! why that face so full of care?" Mazeppa's second song, the fine dramatic trio, and the instrumental introduction descriptive of the flight of the "Tartar of the Ukraine breed," and the suffering accents of Mazeppa, bound to the creature's back, are most expressive. A bright and effective chorus, concludes this most interesting work.

"Blanche de Nevers" the second opera written by Balfe, according to the terms of his contract, was produced at Covent Garden Theatre on the 21st November, 1862. The libretto provided by John Brougham displayed more regard for poetical expression than for effective dramatic situations. It was compiled at the request of Mr. Harrison, and the sentimental part for the lover was undertaken by him, although all but himself could see that the qualities necessary to excite sympathy had been lost in the passage of time. The public was not enthusiastic about the work. The papers of the time singled out many points of excellence, the chief, being the carefulness of the writing throughout, the ingenuity brought into play in fitting the singers with passages suited to their

artistic peculiarities, the dramatic power of the *ensembles*, the beauty of the ballet, the genuine verve in the comic music, and the clever and interesting scoring.

The plot was a mixture of gipsy life and intrigue, but the incidents were well worn and familiar. Good as Balfe's music was it could not make the story interesting. It pleased musicians, but the audiences were too shy to come out. The words were said to be better than those of the poet Bunn, but there was none of that extraordinary knowledge of stage effect which Bunn always showed even in the weakest of his books.

For the third opera under the contract Balfe wrote "The Armourer of Nantes," the book by the author of the "Puritan's Daughter," Mr J. V. Bridgman, who had taken Victor Hugo's "Marie Tudor" as his guide to a subject. Produced at Covent Garden on 12th February, 1863, it did not fail to satisfy those who looked for high dramatic expression and melodious phrases. The subject included a variety of character and form of utterance, and the last act was held to be one of the best Balfe had written. The choruses were

more carefully constructed than heretofore, for increased knowledge of music had produced a corresponding effect in the qualifications of those who filled the inferior but not unimportant situations in an operatic performance.

With the exception of a little operetta, "The Sleeping Queen," written for Mr. and Mrs. German Reed, the words by H. Farnie, the "Armourer" was the last new work that Balfe ever produced in his lifetime. The greater part of the book of "The Armourer" was translated, and Balfe busied himself in arranging the work for the Italian stage, a work he never completed. He began to long for rest and repose. As time flew on, the malady, which a third of a century before had sent him to Italy, became more troublesome with increasing years. The excitement and turmoil of London life no longer possessed its ancient charms for him. He had realized enough to be able to say, "Thank God I am no more in a situation to sell my work under its value." What other labour he chose to undertake he could do at his leisure. The need of eking out existence by a variety of occupations, or rather the exercise of his varied genius in many

forms, no longer existed. He had won a good name, and had, to a certain extent, helped to educate audiences, who were ready at all times to listen to his utterances. His children's children had grown up about him, and he was "a happy old gentleman." He therefore determined to make the most of his happiness. He sold the lease of his house in Upper Seymour Street, London, and purchased a small property in Hertfordshire called by the romantic name of "Rowney Abbey." The house, picturesque in appearance, though modern in origin, stood on a part of the site of a priory of Benedictine nuns called Rowena Abbey, founded in the reign of the second Henry by Conan, Duke of Brittany, Earl of Richmond, and Lord of the Manor of Great Mundon. The house was five miles from Ware, and seven from Hertford. There were gardens, fields, farmsteads, a small copse or wood, and other delights for occupation and pleasure, including a famous fish pond enlarged from an ancient pool. Here Balfe was wont to enjoy a "contemplative man's recreation." Other quiet field sports he learned to accustom himself to, and his gifted wife had made "such a wonder-

ful place of Rowney," by her care and skill, so that when he returned after a short absence he could "scarcely believe his eyes, everything is so lovely and very comfortable."

In the midst of his comfort and enjoyment he found time and inclination for work. He rescored the overtures to several of his operas, and contemplated the revision of all his compositions for the stage as far as possible. With this notion in view he drew up a list of his operas.

He had at least four important books of new operas to work at. One by Planché, "The Siege of Calais;" one by Farnie, title not stated; one by Oxenford, "The Lady of Lyons;" and one by Matthison, "The Knight of the Leopard."

Here it was that he began and nearly finished two acts of the opera which was sent to him by Farnie. Here it was that he read but could find no inspiration in a book by Planché. From Rowney also he wrote, 10th September, 1866, to his old friend Mr. T. Chappell, "I like the idea very much of composing Oxenford's libretto, 'The Lady of Lyons.' Would you have any objection to my reading it?" Here it was that he completed the revision

of the scores of "The Knight of the Leopard," his last and best work. Busy to the last was this faithful and well-loved servant of the public, after an unparalleled career of more than half a century.

The "Siege of Calais," an opera in three acts, was written by Planché for Mendelssohn, who only liked the first act. Balfe expressed the same opinion, and further thought the other acts wanting in dramatic situations. Henry Smart had seen the book, and had actually written music for the first act, but could not get on with the rest. Planché states in his "Recollections" that Balfe was engaged upon the opera at the time of his death. This could not have been the case. The book had been returned to Mr. T. Chappell, to whom it belonged, some time previously. Balfe found no inspiration in it, for not a single note or any reference to it was found among his papers or sketch books.

Of Farnie's opera nearly two acts were completed, then the work was stopped. It is doubtful whether Balfe furnished any music for Oxenford's book, though he had it in his possession some

time, and wrote to Mr. T. Chappell from Rowney on the 10th September, 1866: "I like the idea very much of composing Oxenford's libretto, 'The Lady of Lyons.'" "

"The Knight of the Leopard," was completed all but a few pages of the scoring of the last piece. On this opera he dwelt with loving fondness, determined to make it the work of his life. "I am studying and making alterations in the 'Knight of the Leopard.' I am very fond of this work; I wonder if it will take the public—*chi lo sa?*" The best offering he could present to the public, for whom he had laboured so long and earnestly, and in whose service he had spent the greater part of the years of half a century. He knew not that that which he intended to be his best work should also be his last, or that this noble outcome of his genius was to be the crowning effort of a career of industry and productiveness unparalleled in the history of English musical art.

CHAPTER XIX.

1865—1870.

THE pleasures of “the paradise,” as Balfe was wont to call Rowney Abbey, the genial character of the air, and the thousand and one little indescribable associations of a residence in a secluded country house, all agreed with him, and he was happy. The children of his eldest daughter, his much-loved “Gigia,” were with him, and for their “comfort and solace” he renewed the memories of his youth, and reproduced out of the hidden stores of his heart his old gaiety of spirit and exuberance of fun.

While the summer days lasted, many and boisterous were the excursions made into the neighbourhood in merry enjoyment. When the autumn succeeded, the changing leaves and ripened fruits of nature may have suggested a tone of sadness in the reflections of the “happy old gentleman,” but there was none shown outwardly.

His "darling wife" had not only made Rowney Abbey beautiful, but with her large-hearted womanly sympathy she had endeared herself to all the poor people in the neighbourhood who would have done anything they knew of to give pleasure to "Madame."

Within the house when the twilight faded, "Gigia" and her father—who took up his violin after years of disuse—would make music together, reproducing Beethoven, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, the children sitting round in rapt attention, little Henry Behrend especially drinking from these performances inspiration of music as from a fountain. Or, as it sometimes happened, grand-papa would be telling some wild and exciting story with a special moral in it, or relating the history of some of the heroes of Scripture. The wondering eyes of the children all turned to his face, beautiful with the earnestness of his manner, and the absorbing interest of his subject. His life had been one of brilliant excitement, of fascinating tumult and ever-increasing anxiety. He had been connected with the best theatres in Europe, had been associated with all the famous

artists of his time, had produced an extraordinary number of successful operas, and had in every respect been "so diligent in his business" that "he had stood before kings." He now enjoyed the rest his toil had earned, but like a wise man he did not cease from labour, and so raise in idleness an enemy against his own peace. /

Even when he accepted an invitation to visit his daughter Victoire, who had now become Duchess de Frias, he carried work with him, not to encumber himself, but to provide a congenial means for the occupation of hours when it was necessary for him to be alone. From "Les Eaux Bonnes" he writes in July, 1865, to his wife. "I have worked like a Trojan, and have finished the instrumentation of the accompaniments of all the pieces I brought with me of the 'Sleeping Queen.'" This was originally written for piano-forte and harmonium. The same letter he ends with an expression which exhibits humour and modesty. "Now good-bye, my darling. All love and affection from the Grandezza and Piccolezza."

The Duke de Frias, the husband of the "grandezza," was the representative of a very

ancient Spanish family. His father had acted as ambassador extraordinary from the Court of Spain at the coronation of our gracious Queen, and a far-away ancestor of his was ambassador plenipotentiary for Spain on the occasion of the accession of James I. A Spanish pamphlet in the British Museum Library, dated 1604, gives an account of the ceremonies observed at that time, and as quoted by Mr. Wm. Chappell in his "Popular Music of the Olden Time," vol. ii., p. 408, further says: "The ambassador kissed his Majesty's hands, craving at the same time permission to salute the ladies present, a custom of which the non-observance on such occasions is deeply resented by the fair sex of this country," and leave was accordingly given.

In the house of his daughter it was that he commenced to write his opera, "The Knight of the Leopard," the book of which had been compiled by Mr. Arthur Matthison from Sir Walter Scott's novel the "Talisman." He thus writes to his wife at Rowney on the 9th of August, 1865:—

"The air of this place does me a great deal of good. I have entirely finished composing the first

act of 'King Lion Heart' libretto, which I brought away with me, and Vic and Pepe think I never created anything more charming than a melody to be sung by the tenor which terminates act the first. I have completely finished the P. F. accompaniment of the said act—what think you of that?"

Balfe was justly enthusiastic about his work, which he knew not was to be his last, for he felt it was his best. It was altogether based upon different lines than those upon which his former operas had been built, and the novelty of the arrangement brought with its contemplation a complete newness of treatment. The subject would not admit of the final "rondo" for the prima donna which had ended nearly all his other operas. The design was broader, grander, and the disposition of the characters in newer style. He felt impelled to rise to the exaltation of his subject. It was English in theme, and he desired to make it thoroughly English on the manly grip of its music. He continued his work when he followed his "children" to Biarritz. His daughter Victoire, an accomplished musician, a good judge, and

naturally a great admirer of her father's genius, in a letter to her mother describes her impressions of the music in words that exhibited the accuracy of her criticism when in after-years the opera was placed upon the stage, though neither she nor her father could share in the delight of the public at the beauty of the work.

"I wish his lovely opera could be given this year ; it is beautiful ! I really think his *very best*—such *melodies*, such a song for the Tenor, quite *schwärmerisch* ! Such a duet for the Prima Donna and Tenor, such an old-fashioned popular melody for *Blondel* ! such a *March* ! such a grand prayer, and such a lovely bit of organ ! Ah ! it really is delicious ! The libretto is really interesting, and there is no vulgar talking on the stage, all recitative. Fancy all the beautiful costumes of the crusaders quite grand."

All the points mentioned by the Duchess de Frias, excepting Blondel's song, which was omitted in the representation, were noted by the public as the most remarkable in the opera.

Balfe completed the work with the exception of a portion of the scoring, and the finale. His idea

was to make a grand *coup de théâtre* for the conclusion, in which the ships of the European armies were to be shown. For the right ordering of this finale he intended consulting his friend Dion Boucicault when he returned home to Rowney.

Such pleasures as could be enjoyed out of doors Balfe indulged in when he stayed with his "children" at Biarritz. His daughter, who knew how necessary it was for him to be careful of his health, watched over him like a mother, and often exercised the right of a loving parent when she deemed it necessary. Here as at home he was passionately fond of fishing. He had planned an excursion with a friend, but his daughter persuaded him to break his engagement on account of his health, which he did by writing the following characteristic letter:—

“Biarritz, Thursday morning.

“MY DEAR O’SHEA,

“The man whose signature is affixed to this letter is suffering under a smarting complaint. Poor fellow possesses a daughter who is a grandee of Spain, who so far forgot her grandezza

last night as to (I blush in being obliged to say it) call her affectionate male parent a DONKEY, merely because he said he was going to fish with Bill O'Shea. She refused to grant a vehicle of locomotion even with one quadruped attached, and finished by saying that if her father persisted in going to the Negresse, that the crime would be of a blacker dye than she could find a name for. What do you think of my paternal position? Under the circumstances I think it better to reverse the order of things, and obey my child. Alas! she fears her dad would catch cold and not fish.

“ Hoping to see you in the course of the day,

“ I remain,

“ Your unhappy friend,

“ M. W. BALFE,

“ Composer of ‘Marble Hall.’ ”

On his way through Paris he called upon St. Georges, who heard portions of the opera sung by Madame Nilsson, who was engaged to sing in London and desired to create the part of Edith, urged him to bring out the opera on the stage at Paris. Balfe, flattered at the memory of past



NILSSON .

triumphs which the invitation implied, declined on the ground that he intended the opera for England first. It was an English subject treated in an English form, but if it was successful it might be heard in due course in Paris. St. Georges bade him *au revoir*, and not farewell, for he believed that ere long his countrymen would offer a hearty welcome to himself and his music on the stage once more.

For nearly two years Balfe lived a happy and quiet life at Rowney, occupying himself with his last opera, which he completed all but the finale, and with making rather than creating music. The severe winter of the years 1867-8 tried him sorely, and so soon as he was strong enough to bear the fatigue of a journey, he started for a short trip on the Continent in March of the latter year. Many changes had occurred in his life and surroundings in the short period since he was in Paris for the first time, to which place he turned by an instinct of gratitude and preference.

Before he started he completed a sonata for pianoforte and violoncello, and a trio for violin, violoncello, and pianoforte. These two charming

works he began in 1866, and completed at his leisure. The sonata was played by Piatti for whom it was written with Miss Agnes Zimmermann at a Saturday popular concert at St. James's Hall, on the 22nd March, 1879. The trio had been presented two years before, on the 17th March, 1877, with Miss Marie Krebs, Herr Joachim, and Signor Piatti as the executants. Of the sonata, it was said, "Had Balfe lived longer, he might, with facility and advantage, have devoted more leisure to this form of composition. His early studies led him to it, and in the midst of his successful career as a writer of operas his thoughts must have often wandered back in that direction. His trio and sonata are proofs of it."

Of the trio, the same competent hand, that of Mr. J. W. Davison, writes: "That our late valued countryman, Michael William Balfe, should have composed instrumental music for the chamber can surprise no one. In his early youth Balfe was an excellent performer on the violin. He also played the violoncello, and, it need scarcely be added, the pianoforte. Why then, familiar as he was with

each instrument, should he not have written a trio for piano, violin, and violoncello?"

The sonata consists of three movements, namely, an "Allegro" in A flat major, an "Adagio" in F minor, and an "Allegro vivace" in A flat major. The trio has four movements, an "Allegro" in A major, an "Adagio" in E major, a "Scherzo" allegro in trio A major, and an "Allegro" (finale) A major. Both works exhibit Balfe's love for melody, and for the shapely graces of the old classical school. Both these works have been published.

The sonata he also arranged for violin, and in that form he was wont to play it with his daughter, Mrs. Behrend, at Rowney Abbey, who with her sister, the Duchess de Frias, in days gone by had been a pupil of Davison and Sterndale Bennett. Balfe also wrote several smaller pieces for the pianoforte which have not been printed. He wrote for Signor Minasi, the flute player, a concerto for his instrument, one version of which was printed and published in Paris.

His visit to Paris was partly for his health and partly on business. M. Carvalho, then lessee of

the Théâtre Lyrique, proposed to bring out "*La Bohémienne*," and had opened negotiations with Balfe. On the 19th of March, 1868, he left Dover, arrived in Paris in the evening, found his daughter, the Duchess de Frias, waiting for him at the station. On the morrow he called upon his friend St. Georges, and upon Gerard, and in the evening was present at a performance of the "*Hamlet*" of Ambroise Thomas, Mdlle. Nilsson and M. Faure sustaining the chief parts. Nine years before, on the same date, he had witnessed the first performance of Gounod's "*Faust*," and was delighted with the success the opera gained. He had seen it in its progress towards completion at the house of Madame Zimmermann, the mother-in-law of Gounod, and predicted a great future for it.

The arrangements for the production of "*La Bohémienne*" were made with Carvalho; and rehearsals were undertaken and commenced. Balfe heard the tenor proposed for the opera sing the part of Lionel in "*Martha*," but "could not accept him." The prima donna selected was Mdlle. Marie Marimon. From various causes needless to specify the performance was not given at that time.

Balfe remained in Paris for a few months, and had some conversation with De Leuwen, one of the authors of "*Les Quatre Fils Aymon*," about a new opera, which, however, was not to be written.

Time went on, and Carvalho, yielding to the pressure of many troubles, relinquished the directorship of the "*Théâtre Lyrique*," and Padeloup, who reigned in his stead, wrote to Balfe at the suggestion of Mr. de St. Georges, and asked Balfe to consent to an arrangement whereby he might open the theatre with "*La Bohémienne*" at the end of the year 1869.

The "old girl," as Balfe was wont to speak of the opera, had been given a few months before at Rouen, under the direction of St. Georges, who had written the French version; the conductor being Massenet, who has since made himself famous by several important compositions. The author of the book was called for again and again to accept compliments intended for himself as well as for the composer.

On the 30th of December Balfe writes, "'*La Bohémienne*' was produced in Paris at *Théâtre Lyrique* first time. A great and genuine success."

An entirely different company of artists was now attached to the theatre, and a little delay arose at the outset because Balfe had heard a new and promising young vocalist, Mdle. Marie Roze, who was at that time a pupil of Wartel. Her voice was fresh and resonant, and her youth and the grace of her personal qualifications made her, in all respects, such a one as would be in every way fitted for the part of Arline. Her master was unwilling, however, to permit her to undertake any important character on the stage so soon, so it was decided to engage Madame Breunel-Lafleur, and she created an extraordinary excitement by her splendid singing and acting. The part of the Queen of the Gipsies was "written up" for Madame Wertenheimer, who also covered herself with honour by her performance. The *mise en scène* was elaborately arranged, and the book and plans were published for future guidance. Balfe rewrote the whole of the scoring, and added some new and fresh ballet music which especially pleased the Parisians.

More than a quarter of a century had passed away since the opera was written, and also since

Balfe had made his first success with "*Le Puits d'Amour*." There were many present at the performance of "*La Bohémienne*" who remembered the pleasure with which they had welcomed the early essay of one who was acknowledged to be still a master in his craft; the greatest among modern English musicians, worthy to rank with the most favoured among French composers. The favour thus accorded to him by the unanimous vote of those whose business it is to guide public opinion was on this occasion only the faithful echo of that opinion pronounced by the public.

Scarcely had the opera ceased to run when a more tangible honour awaited him. On the 22nd of March, 1870, Balfe enters in his diary—happily saved from the destruction to which he usually doomed such records—"Received official notice of the Emperor having conferred upon me the decoration of the *Légion d'Honneur*." In a line below and apart are the words, "*Monsieur le Chevalier !!!*" as though he was trying the effect the sentence would produce upon his eye, and made the endeavour to accustom himself to the sight of his new name. On the 13th of April

following, the Regent of Spain sent from Madrid a notification of his appointment as Commander of the Order of Charles III. In May he was still suffering from the effects of a severe attack of bronchitis, which had wearied him through the winter, and he returned home to Rowney to rest. The air of Rowney restored him for a while. The happy days he had passed in his rural retreat were not to be wholly renewed. His mind dwelt upon the loss of his daughter, Mrs. Behrend, his much-loved "Gigia." The whole world had changed for him, but he seemed outwardly to bear the same brave spirit as of old, and to enjoy his rest, and the invigorating air of the place his "darling wife had made so beautiful" for him. When the autumn came, the serious reality of his bodily weakness was revealed to all but to himself. In September he caught cold, and his complaint—spasmodic asthma—was renewed with great violence. He recovered, however, for a while, only to suffer in greater proportion afterwards. It was hoped that while he was for a time better, a change to a more genial climate might help him to grow stronger,

at all events to prolong his life or relieve his suffering.

A sudden change alarmed all around him ; his old friend Dr. Williams came quickly to see him. All human hope was vain. Soon after noon on the 20th of October his sufferings were at an end, and his once busy brain was for ever at rest.

His old friend and literary *confrère*, Edward Fitzball, thus sang his threnody :—

MICHAEL WILLIAM BALFE.

Dear sunny BALFE ! and is he dead ?
 And all the golden moments fled
 In which this joyous child of song
 Glided life's sparkling stream along,
 And touched the chords of Music's lyre
 With genial and poetic fire,
 So beautifully sweet to hear,
 That kings bent down a listening ear,
 And nations wafted to the skies
 The fragrance of his melodies !
 Yes : he is gone ! and many a day
 In Music's span must pass away
 Ere such another gifted hand
 "The light of other days" command,
 Or sanctify at fancy's calls
 The fairy dreams of "Marble Halls."

Strew o'er his grave the choicest flowers
 From rosy banks of dewy bowers ;
 Or if no drop of dew appears,
 They will not lack a people's tears
 To shed o'er them a bright relief
 From hearts oppressed with earnest grief.

It was not Music's spell alone,
Which claimed our BALFE as all her own.
For he had manhood's merits too
Such as fill up the hearts of few :
The generous soul ; the gentle word ;
The noblest feelings in accord.
He knew no envy—grudged no pains
To amplify a brother's gains.

Bury him in some leafy dale
Where sings at eve the nightingale,
Or where at dawn the lark on high
Peals its soft tribute from the sky,
Floating o'er one who liked the song
Of summer birds : all Nature's throng
To charm, as, in Arcadian days,
The vales and mountains with his lays,
Notes of Apollo.

Rest, BALFE, rest,
Than thine ne'er throbbed a kinder breast ;
Others may come with skill as great,
But hardly one to emulate
A soul like thine : to blazon forth,
At once, mind, genius, taste, and worth.

CHAPTER XX.

1870—1876.

THE news of his death fell with heavy blow upon all the musical world. Many of his *confrères* strove to give expression to their regret at his departure. The public felt that they had lost a dear and valued friend. All those who had known him seemed to be overweighted with grief. The cemetery at Kensal Green was filled with friends all mourning. It was a consolation to them to recall their remembrance of his kind heart, his manly spirit, his generous and thoughtful care for the best interests of all with whom he came in contact.

When in time his heart-broken widow placed a simple monumental stone over his grave to mark his remains, men began to rouse themselves, and to inquire of each other the reason they had not thought to pay greater honour to the memory of one who had done so much for the elevation of the art he professed and the profession to which

he belonged. Had his years been occupied with those pursuits which bring misery and desolation in their train, none would have denied his right to be recognised in the manner usual with such heroes after his death.

He lies in the same "campo santo" with Bishop, Wallace, Lover, Goss, and others whose names will "live for evermore."

His life was spent in the exercise of peaceful arts, and his genius has brought pleasure and even happiness wherever his works were known. His body should have rested in the time-honoured abbey of Westminster. It was too late to seek that distinction now, but it was not too late to ask permission to place a tablet on the walls of the building, that posterity might know that his contemporaries had not been ungrateful, or unmindful of his genius.

A memorial was signed by a number of influential persons of all ranks in the social and artistic world, and presented to the Dean of Westminster, Dr. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley. He duly acknowledged the receipt of the memorial, and stated his intention of finding a place for the pro-

posed tablet when he returned home after the holiday he was about to take. The memorialists waited in silence, and in not a little anxiety, for a long time for a communication from the Dean. When some four years had elapsed it was deemed expedient to present a reminder in the form of a second letter on the subject. This was signed by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, President of the Royal Academy of Music, Dublin, the Duke of Abercorn, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Archbishop of Armagh, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, the Duke of Leinster, the Bishop of Limerick, the Bishop of Derry, the Dean of St. Patrick's, Dean MacDonnell, the Master of the Rolls, Viscount Monck, and the Rev. Lord O'Niell. Mr. Hercules MacDonnell was the secretary.

Dean Stanley's reply was as follows:—

DEANERY, WESTMINSTER,

22nd June, 1875.

MY DEAR SIR,

I beg to acknowledge the Address which I have had the honour to receive from you, signed by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and other distinguished persons, with a letter from yourself, dated June 8th, in reference to the erection of a Monumental Tablet in Westminster Abbey, in memory of the late Mr. BALFE.

I have delayed to reply, partly from absence in the country, partly from the desire to give full consideration to the request contained in the Memorial and in your letter.

With every wish to accede to a desire so forcibly expressed, and supported by so many eminent names, I am compelled to adhere to the same answer which I have already given on more than one occasion in reference to this and similar applications—that I cannot, in consideration of the limited space in the Abbey and its Cloisters, and of the demands of those who shall come after us, admit, unless in exceptional cases, the increase of Cenotaphs, until I have received from the Government the assurance that the accommodation for such monuments will be enlarged, so as to give additional room for their suitable erection.

I have been led to hope that such assurance will be given, but I have not yet been able to succeed in obtaining it; and you will, therefore, understand that I am, for the present, debarred from acceding to a request which it would have given me so much pleasure to satisfy, both from the desire to meet the wishes of the distinguished persons who have applied and also to render honour to a gifted native of the Sister Island.

I beg to remain, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR P. STANLEY.

To Hercules MacDonnell, Esq., J.P., &c.

Meanwhile Balfe's name was once more brought pleasantly before the public by the production of his opera, "The Knight of the Leopard," on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre by Mr. Mapleson, the son of the generous old copyist of the theatre. Madame Christine Nilsson had kept her word to Balfe, and sang in the opera she admired so much in Paris, but it was not in English, but in Italian. The opera was now called "Il Talismano," and

the translation from the original tongue was made by Signor Guiseppe Zaffira most elegantly. It was promised for the season of 1873, but was produced on the 11th of June, 1874.

This opera was received by the whole press with delight. The success was instant and signal. The notice in the *Times* newspaper a day or two following the performance conveyed the views of musicians and of the public.

“The predictions of those who believed in a genuine success for Balfe’s posthumous opera are fully justified by the result. It has been given five times within a short period, and a sixth performance is announced. That ‘*Il Talismano*’ is destined to become one of the most generally attractive of its composer’s works there cannot, in our opinion, be a doubt. It contains a more than usually liberal share of those characteristic melodies which proclaim Balfe’s individuality, and to which, in a great measure, he owed his wide acceptance as, after his manner, the operatic English composer of his day.

“Among them are ‘*Placida Notte*’ (‘*Edith’s Prayer*’), sung by Madame Christine Nilsson;

‘Candido Fiore’ (the ‘Rose Song’), and ‘A te coll’aure sera,’ both by Signor Campanini; ‘La Guerra Appena’ (‘Romance of Navarre’), the ‘Canzona d’Evelina,’ and ‘Nella Dolce Trepidarga’—the first by Madame Marie Roze, the second and third by Madame Christine Nilsson. These all bear the true stamp of their author, and some of them—the ‘Rose Song’ especially, which Mr. Sims Reeves (for whom it was specially written) introduced not long since at his benefit at the Royal Albert Hall—are already making their way into our concert rooms, where the name of ‘Balfe’ has always exercised a spell. But leaving the rest of the music to speak for itself, there are other reasons why ‘Il Talismano’ is successful. Four or five among the *dramatis personæ* enjoy excellent opportunities for effect, which if not taken advantage of, neither the author of the libretto nor the author of the music can be blamed. Fortunately the leading parts are in very competent hands at Her Majesty’s Opera. The chief attraction, the life and soul of the performance, is Madame Nilsson, who makes far more out of Edith

Plantagenet than at first sight could have appeared possible. The popular Swedish songstress gives the whole of her music in perfection, and endows the character she has to assume with vivid and natural life. The task voluntarily undertaken by Madame Nilsson in order to serve our late compatriot has been fulfilled with unmistakable goodwill, and the applause which greets her on every occasion is not solely due to the professional excellence displayed in a part she has evidently studied *con amore*, but to another reason besides; upon which, after what has been said, it would be superfluous to dwell. How much interest Sir Michael Costa has taken in the preparation for public performance of the last work of one with whom he was on close terms of friendship is tolerably well known in musical circles. What importance was attached by the management to the production of 'Il Talismano' is seen by the way in which it is placed upon the stage. Mr. W. Beverley has contributed scenery which, though not laid out on an unusually extensive scale, is picturesque even for him, and the 'stage business' is

admirably cared for by Mr. Stirling, who, not for the first time, has been more or less directly concerned in helping to get up an opera of Balfe's."

Mr. Desmond L. Ryan, in an exhaustive technical and appreciative analysis of the opera, inserted in Kenney's "Memoir of Balfe," thus estimates the work as a whole:—

"Looking at 'Il Talismano' from the standpoint of pure art, it will be found to depend upon its intrinsic fund of pure, wholesome melody. . . . The time, however, is perhaps not ripe for a just estimate of Balfe's posthumous work to be made. We have leanings towards the man, as well as for or against the musician, which it must take a long course of years to neutralize. But it will be generally admitted and conceded that 'Il Talismano,' albeit a departure from his accepted school of composition, was one of Balfe's happiest and soundest efforts, and the form, artistically speaking, is as much superior to his earlier productions in opera as Beethoven's 'Eroica' symphony is an advance upon his first. Balfe did not live to see his best ideas realized, but the very existence of 'Il Talismano' proves that he was not only a man

who moved with the times, but that he had the apt discrimination to choose between the salutary and meretricious qualities of the modern school of music. 'Il Talismano,' in the abstract, was but an experiment in a new field of lyric composition ; as such it enlists our sympathies, and commands our admiration. The opera is a wholesome and forcible dramatic work, and the latent power which it reveals renders our respect the stronger, and our sorrow the more poignant that its gifted composer was not spared us to make still greater efforts in the same direction."

Without despairing to obtain ultimately the national recognition of Balfe's genius by the erection of a tablet in Westminster Abbey, his friends determined to place a memorial in some other suitable spot. Mr. T. Chappell, Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, and Mr. Dion Boucicault formed a committee, and a sufficient amount of money was raised to help the project. It was proposed to erect a statue, and the commission to execute this was entrusted to M. Malempré, a Belgian sculptor, who acquitted himself of the task in a most satisfactory manner. The statue was placed, in company with

those of Edmund Kean, David Garrick, and Shakespeare, in the vestibule of Drury Lane Theatre, where the genius of Balfe had been most fully revealed and highly honoured.

The ceremony of unveiling the statue took place on Friday, the 25th of September, 1874, in the presence of a completely representative assembly—Lord Alfred Paget, Sir George Armitage, Baron Rothschild, Sir Michael Costa, Messrs. Gruneisen, G. A. Macfarren, F. Puzzi, Chatterton, Creswick, J. W. Davison, W. D. Davison, Lazarus, Maycock, T. Chappell, Matthison, Raphael Costa, Emanuel Garcia, the brother of Malibran, George Osborne, August Manns, Brinley Richards, Charles Santley, George Honey, Charles Lyall, C. L. Kenney, Joseph Bennett, W. Ganz, J. Fernandez, T. Graves, Thomas Oliphant, Andrew Halliday, John Hollingshead, G. A. Sala, Michael Williams, Edward Falconer, Henry Phillips, and others.

Mr. Gruneisen, as the secretary, explained that in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Boucicault and Sir Julius Benedict, he had been called upon to take the chair, and this gave him the opportunity of referring to Balfe's unprecedented

career as a composer. He also mentioned with pride that this was the first time a statue had been raised to any native musical composer in England.

“The speaker addressed himself to sympathetic hearers whenever he dwelt upon the genius of him whom they had met to honour, and the close of his remarks was followed by applause. The duty of unveiling the statue having been offered to, and accepted by, Sir Michael Costa, that gentleman stepped forward and removed the curtain. A moment of silent inspection followed the act, and then a round of cheering marked the approval of the critical assembly, most of whom had known Balfe well. The statue, which is about seven feet in height, represents the master in the act of composition, holding a manuscript in the left hand and a pen in the right. Nothing is wanting of ease and grace in the pose of the figure, the expression of the countenance is refined and pleasing, while dignity and breadth of outline are secured by the artistically arranged folds of the cloak, worn so as to leave the right shoulder and arm free.”

Nearly two years after the statue was set in its place, a Balfe festival was given at the Alexandra Palace on Muswell Hill, the object of which was to raise a fund to endow a scholarship in the name of the popular composer at the Royal Academy of Music, an institution for which Balfe always expressed a great amount of sympathy and interest.

The committee who made the arrangements for the festival included the Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, Dr. Macfarren, and other gentlemen of position in the musical world. The day fixed was the 29th of July, 1876, and as may be expected music formed a special feature of the proceedings. Mr. Frederic Archer, then the organist of the Palace, had been very active in his help on the committee, played in his own inimitable style on the large organ a selection from "The Bondman," "The Rose of Castille," "Blanche de Nevers," "Catherine Grey," "Joan of Arc," "Mazeppa," and "The Puritan's Daughter." At the concert Madame Christine Nilsson, Madame Rose Hersee, Madame Marie Roze, Miss Enriquez, Mr. Maybrick, Mr. H.

Reynolds, and Mr. Edward Lloyd, with an orchestra and chorus performed selections from "Il Talismano," "The Maid of Artois," "Falstaff," "The Enchantress," "The Maid of Honour," and "The Siege of Rochelle," under the direction of Sir Michael Costa; "The Bohemian Girl" was represented in the theatre with Mr. H. Weist Hill as conductor, and a military band also played pieces by Balfe in the gardens and elsewhere several times during the day. There was no lack of variety or contrast in the works, for all that the name of the composer appended to the list showed an unbroken uniformity. The festival was a success artistically and financially, and the Balfe scholarship was founded, and the great musician's name was perpetuated in the Academy after a manner which would have fully commended itself to him had he been alive. His sympathies were always with the institution which in his youth he had desired to enter, but had, it appears, done nothing more beyond putting his name down for admission.

CHAPTER XXI.

1876—1882.

THE example set by England in erecting a monument to Balfe in the recognised national theatre Drury Lane and otherwise commemorating his genius was shortly afterwards followed in Ireland. One of the leading Irish journals in commenting upon the action done in London, says:—"The name of Michael Balfe, one of the brightest that has illuminated the pages of musical history in the England of our day, is dear to every lover of art in the country that gave him birth. We trust that at no distant period a fitting memorial of his exalted genius, will be erected in the Irish metropolis side by side with those of Burke and Goldsmith; men, who like him, brought the best gifts of their brilliant minds, and the warm fervour of their Irish hearts to the service of the sister isle, but at the same time it seems congenious that the country in which he passed the greater part of his public life, for whose music he has done

so much, whose national opera he helped to establish and adorn, to whose musical archives he has given such works, as 'The Rose of Castille,' and 'The Bohemian Girl,' should take heed to honour the memory of the dead musician, upon whose living brow no one of the crowns with which royalty rewards genius was placed."

Following this suggestion a "Balfe Memorial Committee" was formed, and a ~~book~~ *bust* of Balfe was placed in the National Gallery in Dublin on the 6th of July, 1878, near to the busts of other illustrious Irishmen, Archbishop Murray, Thomas Moore, the poet, Maclise, the painter, Curran and Shiel, the famous orators. The bust of Balfe, an elegant piece of workmanship and spirited likeness was executed by Thomas Farrell, R.H.A. Owing to the illness of the Duke of Leinster, Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-at-Arms, presided. Mr. Hercules MacDonnell read the report of the sub-committee which stated that the balance of the money collected would be appropriated to the foundation of a prize for the composition of a song, by a musician of Irish birth.

Sir Robert P. Stewart the amiable and talented

Professor of Music in Trinity College, Dublin, also gave three lectures on "Irish music and musicians ending with Balfe," in the Ancient Concert Rooms in Dublin on the 29th May, the 5th and 12th of June in the same year, and devoted the proceeds to the erection of a memorial window in St. Patrick's Cathedral. This was uncovered by her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough, on the 14th April, 1879.

The window was designed and made by Ballantine and Son, of Edinburgh, and represents Erin leaning upon a harp—modelled from the harp of Brian Boroimhe preserved in Trinity College,—and crowning the bust of the Museum. She is attired in a white robe, with a broad green mantle, and wears a tearful countenance, typical of Ireland's grief at the death of Balfe.

The following is the inscription:—"In memory of Michael William Balfe, born in Dublin, May 15th, 1808; died at Rowney Abbey, Hertfordshire, October 20th, 1870; the most celebrated, genial, and beloved of Irish musicians. Erected April, 1879, by R. P. Stewart, Knt., Mus. D., one of the Vicars Choral."



ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN.

Upon the front of the house, No. 10, Pitt Street, a tablet of marble has been placed by the occupant, Mr. John Logan, a practical musician himself, and a great admirer of Balfe's talents. This records the fact that:—"In this house M. W. Balfe was born, 1808."

All these worthy efforts to commemorate the genius of one who had brought honour to the craft to which he belonged, were most gratifying. Their value was recognised on all sides. By those who desired to show to posterity the estimation in which Balfe was held, and by those who believed that an equally good monument was erected in the hearts of all who loved his music, a more enduring record was still asked, and the fulfilment of the promise made by Dean Stanley was anxiously looked for. Before he was able to fulfil his promise, society and the whole civilised world had to mourn his loss, and the promise he had made remained unaccomplished. When Dr. Bradley was appointed and installed Dean of Westminster in the room of Dean Stanley, the application was renewed, at a time, as it was considered, that was singularly opportune.

The Prince of Wales following in the footsteps of his illustrious father, expressed his desire to see a National School of Music founded in this country. This project naturally directed attention to the few great musicians England had nurtured. Of these Balfe was the chief. With the exception of the statue in Drury Lane there was no honour paid to his memory in England. His face and name were not admitted to rank with the eminent Englishmen commemorated on the monument to the Prince Consort in Hyde Park. Sterndale Bennett, a representative musician in a different style of art to that practised by Balfe, was also forgotten. Sir Henry Bishop's features alone was figured forth as representing the champions of modern native music.

There was probably no wilful desire to ignore the claims of musicians to a place on a monument to one who all his life loved the art, and honoured its professors, but there was no advocate whose voice was powerful enough to be heard in preferring the claim at the time.

The professors of the Universities, the organists of the several English cathedrals, other musicians

eminent in various departments of the art, once more sought to be heard on behalf of a musician whose genius they all honoured. An address couched in the following terms, was presented to the Dean of Westminster, preceded by a statement of the reasons for making the request:—

Balfe was the first British Composer to elevate the English Lyric Drama to a high position in this Country; so was he also the first *native subject* who was able to compete on the Continent with foreign Composers, and produce in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, the works of a British Musician. His prolific creative power is best proved by the published list of the works produced in England and on the Continent. Balfe wrote twenty-nine Operas, three of them to French text for original production in Paris, five to Italian librettos and the other twenty-one to English words. Not only did he write these twenty-nine Lyrical Dramas, but he produced them successfully. To this record of inventive industry, may be added his celebrated setting of many of Longfellow's Poems, three Cantatas, countless songs, and other compositions. His melodies have not only cheered every homestead in Britain, but have become so popular that they may be called National. In the Colonies and in the United States, the name of Balfe is as much a household word as in the heart of London, equal, as a Musician, to Dickens, as a Novelist, if the widest popularity counts as a test.

Balfe was the Champion of English Musical Art, not only at home, but abroad. It was his peculiar province to support the dignity of English Dramatic Composition on the Continent, and to prove that the possession of executive and creative faculties in the same individual is by no means incompatible. Such a career as that of Balfe is rare and unprecedented in the Kingdom, and it will be through his genius and that of such as follow him, that our countrymen will, sooner or later, be compelled to relinquish the prevalent prejudice against English Musical capability.

His genius was honoured by Foreign Potentates. In France he was made Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur; in Spain he was created Commendatore of the Order of Carlo III.

As there now exists a disposition to foster native talent and to encourage it to its full development, it seems to be both right and proper that future generations should be able to note with pride, that English genius was not unmarked and unregarded by those living in the present time.

In the belief that his talents brought honour to the Country, and that his name deserves to be nationally recorded, it is proposed to send the following Memorial to The Very Reverend the Dean of Westminster, which has been signed by the Professors of Music in the Universities, by eminent Conductors, heads of Musical Educational establishments, and by a majority of the Organists of the Cathedrals in the United Kingdom.

May 4th, 1882.

VERY REVEREND SIR,

We, whose names are appended hereto, desire to add our testimony to the claim of MICHAEL WILLIAM BALFE as a representative National Composer; and to express our earnest hope that you will accede to the request to allow a Tablet to be placed in Westminster Abbey, to the memory of a Musician, whose genius and achievements won for him, during his lifetime, a high reputation, not only among his countrymen, but also upon the Continent of Europe.

To the Very Reverend Dean of Westminster.

Signed by—

FREDK. A. GORE OUSELEY, Bart., M.A., Mus. Doc., Oxon.,
Precentor of Hereford, and Professor of
Music in the University of Oxford.

G. A. MACFARREN, M.A., Mus. Doc., Oxon., Mus. Doc., Cantab.,
Principal of the Royal Academy of Music;
Professor of Music in the University
of Cambridge.

ROBERT PRESCOTT STEWART, Knight, Mus. Doc., Dub.,
Organist of Christ Church and St. Patrick's,
Dublin; Professor of Music, Trinity
College, Dublin.

- HERBERT S. OAKELEY, Knight, M.A., Mus. Doc., Oxon.,
Professor of Music in the University of
Edinburgh.
- GEORGE J. ELVEY, Knight, Mus. Doc., Oxon.,
Organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor.
- JOHN FREDERICK BRIDGE, Mus. Doc., Oxon.,
Permanent Deputy Organist of Westminster
Abbey.
- JOHN STAINER, M.A., Mus. Doc., Oxon.,
Organist of St. Paul's Cathedral.
- GEORGE BENSON, Mus. Bac., Cantab.,
Of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, and
Westminster Abbey.
- GEORGE M. GARRETT, M.A., Mus. Doc., Cantab.,
St. John's College, Cambridge.
- JAMES TAYLOR, Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
Organist of New College; Organist of the
University of Oxford.
- WALTER PARRATT, Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
Organist of Magdalen College, Oxford.
- W. HOWELL ALLCHIN, Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
Organist of St. John's College, Oxford.
- THOMAS H. COLLINSON, Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
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fessor of Music in the University.
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- MICHAEL COSTA, Knight.
- WILLIAM GEORGE CUSINS,
Conductor of the Philharmonic Society
Master of Her Majesty's Music.
- JOSEPH BARNBY,
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GEORGE MOUNT,

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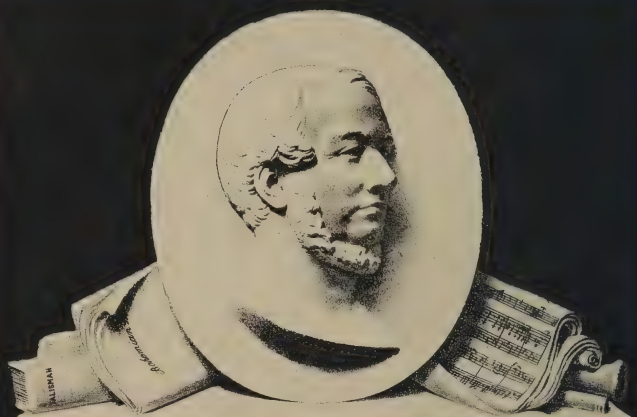
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Organist of Ripon Cathedral.



MICHAEL WILLIAM
BALFE,

BORN IN DUBLIN.

15TH MAY 1808,

DIED AT ROWNY ABBEY, HERTFORDSHIRE.

20TH OCTOBER 1870.

KNIGHT OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR OF FRANCE.
COMMANDER OF THE ORDER OF CHARLES III OF SPAIN.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

LANGDON COLBORNE, Mus. Bac., Cantab.,
Organist of Hereford Cathedral.

EDWARD BUNNETT, Mus. Doc., Cantab.,
Organist to the Corporation, Norwich.

JOSEPH C. BRIDGE, M.A., Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
Organist of the Cathedral, Chester.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

WM. ALEX. BARRETT, Mus. Bac., Oxon.,
Vicar Choral, St. Paul's Cathedral.

To this a favourable reply was received, and the Dean with the utmost courtesy and consideration himself selected a place for the tablet, and in every way exhibited the kindest and liveliest interest in the matter.

The whole musical world recognised the honour as one paid in a minor degree to Balfe, in a major degree to all native musicians. The tablet was placed in the north-west aisle, almost side by side with the monuments to Henry Purcell, and Dr. Samuel Arnold, close to the tomb of William Sterndale Bennett, and opposite the monuments of Dr. John Blow, and Dr. William Croft.

The tablet is of pure white Carrara marble. On the lower panel is the inscription:—"Michael William Balfe. Born in Dublin, the 15th of May, 1808, died at Rowney Abbey, Hertfordshire, the

20th of October, 1870." On the moulding below are the words:—"Knight of the Legion of Honour of France, Commander of the Order of Charles III., of Spain." Resting on the top of the panel is an oval medallion portrait of Balfe. On one side of the medallion are shown books of the scores of "The Talisman," and "The Bohemian Girl." On the other side may be seen the ends of some musical instruments of the oboe type, and a page of a music book, opened at random as it were, at the song in "The Bohemian Girl." The words exhibited convey their own application—

There may, perhaps, in such a scene
Some recollection be
Of days that once have happy been,
Then you'll remember me.

The tablet was unveiled on the twelfth anniversary of his death, the 20th of October, 1882. During the afternoon service an anthem of his composition, adapted to English words beginning "Save me, O God," from the "Gratias agimus," and "Agnus Dei," written in 1846, was sung in the place proper, and all that was arranged for that day within those hallowed walls with reference to

Balfe was a fitting end to the earthly career of one who found English operatic art comparatively poor, and left it absolutely rich, not only by the possession of his own works, but also by those produced in emulation of his example.

CHAPTER XXII.

A COMPLETE list of Balfe's compositions would be difficult, if not impossible, to compile. The only catalogue he drew up is the following:—

1. I Rivali di se Stessi, Palermo ...	...	1829
2. Un Avvertimenti di Gelosi, Pavia ...	...	1830
3. Enrico quarto al passo del Marno, Milano		1831
4. Siege of Rochelle ...	...	1835
5. Maid of Artois ...	...	1836
6. Catherine Grey ...	...	1837
7. Joan of Arc ...	...	1837
8. Diadeste ...	...	1838
9. Falstaff ...	...	1838
10. Keolanthé ...	...	1841
11. Le Puits d'Amour ...	...	1843
12. The Bohemian Girl ...	...	1843
13. The Daughter of St. Mark ...	...	1844
14. Les Quatre Fils Aymon ...	...	1844
15. The Enchantress... ...	...	1845
16. L'Etoile de Seville ...	...	1845
17. The Bondman ...	...	1846
18. The Devil's in it... ...	...	1847
19. The Maid of Honour ...	...	1847
20. The Sicilian Bride ...	...	1852
21. The Rose of Castille ...	...	1857
22. Šatanella... ...	...	1858
23. Bianca ...	...	1860
24. The Puritan's Daughter ...	...	1861
25. The Armourer of Nantes ...	...	1863
26. Pittore e Duca, Trieste... ...	...	1856
27. Blanche de Nevers ...	...	1862

He has also produced several cantatas—one written for Malibran in Paris, 1828, one for Grisi in Bologna in 1830, the International Ode in 1851, the Cantata for female voices, written for the singers of the Opera, the dramatic Cantata “Mazeppa,” in 1860, besides the unperformed operas of Atila, Elfrida, and the uncompleted and untitled work begun in 1848. From the time of the composition of the Polacca in 1815, “Young Fanny” in 1817, to the year 1870, when he wrote his last ballad, he gave to the world more than 500 different songs, duets, and small pieces, set to English, French, or Italian words. A great number of these have been published, and have attained world-wide fame. A quantity of lesser pieces written by him in the exercise of his official duties as conductor and so forth can never be counted, except as helping to swell the record of his astonishing industry and fertility.

His labours in the cause of art are further shown by the care and skill with which he produced for the first time in England, among other operas, while he was conductor at Her Majesty's Theatre, Verdi's “Nino” or “Nabucco,” his “Masna-

dieri"—founded on Schiller's "Robbers"—for Jenny Lind, Halévy's "Tempesta," for Lablache and Carlotta Grisi, libretto originally written by Scribe for Mendelssohn, but declined by him, as departing too much from the text of Shakespeare, Thalberg's "Florinda" for Cruvelli, "Fidelio" for the first time on the Italian stage, and "Don Giovanni," in a style which had not been approached up to that time, and has never been equalled since.

Among the songs Balfe wrote which have become popular to an unprecedented extent, and have exercised an extraordinary influence over the popular mind, may be mentioned by way of *résumé*: "The Lover's Mistake," 1817; "Cottage near Rochelle," 1835; "The Light of other Days," 1836; "Look forth, my fairest," 1837; "Might I march through life again," 1837; "My bark is bounding near," 1838; "O Qual Gioia," 1838; "O Andrea," 1841; "Marble Halls," "The heart bowed down," "Then you'll remember me," 1843; "The Gondolier," "We may be happy yet," 1844; "Child of the Sun," "It is not form, it is not face," 1846; "In this old chair," 1847;

“Come into the garden, Maud,” “Good-night, beloved,” “The green trees,” “The Muleteer,” 1857; “The power of love,” 1858; “They tell me thou’rt the favoured guest,” “The blighted flower,” “The Cantineer,” “The Merry Zingara,” “Margaretta,” “The Rose Song,” and many more less typical, besides such choral pieces as “Vive le Roi,” “The Gipsies’ Chorus,” “The Pirate Chorus,” and others which will present themselves to the minds of the admirers of Balfe’s music. The mere mention of the titles at once suggests the melodies proper to them; they are inseparably connected and associated in a manner which has become proverbial.

The last song Balfe wrote was in 1869 for Sims Reeves, whose voice and artistic qualities he admired in the highest degree. It was based upon the model of the famous “Come into the garden, Maud,” also written for Reeves, which, when it was finished and sent from Paris for the approval of the great tenor, the reply received was characteristic and prompt, “Yes, it will do.” How Reeves made the song “do” all the world knows.

It may be interesting to state in this place that

when the Prince of Wales visited Paris for the Exhibition of 1879 English music was represented by two of Balfe's pieces at one concert. The trio, "Vorrei Parlar," from "Falstaff," and "Come into the garden," sung by Mr. Maas, and most enthusiastically encored. The Parisians agreed with Sims Reeves's estimate of the song.

The conditions under which his own operas were produced have been already set forth in these pages before the reader. Their effect upon the world of art may also be gathered from the same source. It is pleasant to recall the memories associated with so much good and worthy work, and to speculate upon the enormous amount of pure pleasure which that work has been the means of conveying to the hearts, not only of the countrymen of the author, but also of those whose speech is different, but who are at one with him in their love of music.

Balfe's melodies, pure, natural, and true, not only find an echo in every heart, but they take up permanent abode there. Those who knew the composer best were wont to say that the charm of his society, and the fascination of his manner, were irresistible. He exercised a spell over all

with whom he came in contact, without in the least degree striving to be "all things to all men." He was not free from the weaknesses of mankind, but in disposition and character he was open and honest. He never scorned the advantages which were pressed upon him because of his genius, but he never employed his genius to augment the number of his advantages. Undaunted in courage, elastic in spirit, ever ready and ever able, he used the gifts with which he was so richly endowed to the benefit of his countrymen, and to elevate the art he always loved and honoured.

The ingenuousness and simplicity of his nature is everywhere reflected in his music. His melodies are of such a character that when the initial phrase falls upon the ear, the ear proposes the sequence. This sequence is so natural, that no other succession of notes but those which are written can satisfy the senses. There is no apparent effort of labour, no smelling of the lamp, no exercise of scientific contrivance thrust in by the neck and shoulders, as it were, for the sake of pedantry. There is no finding out of a strange chord and building up a passage to exhibit it; there are no

ugly progressions introduced for the sake of showing a contempt for the graces of art, and the position of superiority in the writer. All is form-like, but never formal. All is shapely, but the outline is never obtained by the introduction of artificial aids. His work is familiar, but never commonplace. Even when in the exuberance of the moment his melodies have been given in all conceivable forms at all conceivable times, and have been so oft repeated that it seems impossible to escape from them, and they are by undesired association with the incidents of every-day life, made worn and hackneyed and common, those same melodies, heard after a long interval of rest, fall upon the ear with refreshing sweetness, and bring in their train only the pleasant portion of the memories of the past.

The touch of melancholy which may be traced in the greater number of his phrases commends itself with particular force to Englishmen. His melodies find out the tender spots in the heart, whether they express joy or sorrow. Hence his popularity with all classes. Educated musicians who review Balfe's works will find that, while he

possessed a peculiar gift in an inexhaustible vein of tunefulness, he was fully acquainted with the resources of art, and was perfectly conversant with all that was required of a scholarly writer. It was wisdom, and not incapacity, which prompted him to refrain from the exercise of a mode of writing which, according to the form he selected for expression, must have been incongruous. Had he written fugues in his choruses and ensembles, as he was well able to do, he might have satisfied a few to whom such a device is particularly dear, but the majority he appealed to would have felt that his pedantry was superfluous, and had spoiled the situations in which they might have appeared.

A reference to the original scores of his operas, placed in the library of the British Museum by his widow, reveals a series of most interesting facts concerning his mode of writing. The one which has chiefest interest for the public is the grace with which he wrote for the several instruments of the orchestra. He gave all enough to say for the purpose in hand, and never compelled them to be obtrusive or coarse. There is no noise for the sake of noise, there is no exuberance of sound which

reminds the hearer of the zealous but misguided efforts of village bands, whose faith in the amount of work done is reckoned by the bustle made in doing it. Above all there is no vulgarity.

In the choice of subjects for his operas Balfe exhibited equally good taste. In not one is there any questionable situation or expression. The plots of his operas are all interesting, and some are exciting, but their interest and excitement are not due to actions or motives of which right-minded men scarcely dare to speak of to each other.

On the stage Balfe was by predilection a moral teacher. There is no sensuous swim in his music, no association with doubtful actions, or connection with words of equivocation, to carry the soul to regions of impurity. All is honest, tender, manly, straightforward, and true.

When the time arrives, and the long-hoped-for national English opera is established, Balfe's works will be found not to be old in form or style. The subjects will also commend themselves to a discriminating public, for "the fashion of a thing may change," but decency will never be without influence.

The *répertoire* of a national opera will not be complete without such works as "The Siege of Rochelle," "The Bondman," "The Bohemian Girl," "The Rose of Castille," "Satanella," and "The Puritan's Daughter." To this may be added his last and greatest work, "The Knight of the Leopard," as "*Il Talismano*" should be in English. All these are varied in style and interesting in treatment, and fitly and fully represent the genius of Balfe at the several stages of his wonderful career, and also show English music in its most acceptable forms.

As a musician, Balfe stands out in bold relief, even among the numbers of great artists by whom he was surrounded and among whom he laboured. Had not his genius been considered to be worthy to be ranked with the best of the French masters, he would not have been invited to write operas for the stage in Paris. No other Englishman had been so distinguished. This was not all. Italy was proud to honour him in like shape, and Germany had sought out his music and taken it to her heart. The universal acceptance of his work, and the fact that it holds permanent place, is a

proof that it is of no ordinary type, no ephemeral concession to passing fancy. That it has lived, and deserves to live, is due to its inherent merit, and the charm it exercises over the mind and soul.

With the exception of Handel, no musician in this or any European country has ever enjoyed so much fame while living as Michael William Balfe. None others but they have exercised sway over the sympathies and affections of a people for so long a period. For thirty years Handel was the idol of society in London, but while he lived his works were known only in the country in which they were produced. It was not until after his death that his fame was extended to foreign countries. Balfe's music won recognition abroad while he was yet alive, and in many a theatre in France in Germany, and in Italy his name is inscribed, or his features depicted, among the distinguished masters of the musical art. In his own country he should be honoured even if no better memorial of him was needed while his works could be performed. The thirty years of Handel's popularity was matched and surpassed by the public favour

which Balfe enjoyed from the date of the production of "The Siege of Rochelle" until his death. When "The Talisman" was placed upon the stage, it was received with an enthusiasm which could not have been excited by anything but the genius exhibited in the music. In days yet to come, the light of that genius will continue to shine, the earthly particles of mortality which clogged it will have vanished, and posterity will bear grateful witness to the worth and value of Balfe's life and work.

THE END.

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NOTE.—By an oversight, the name of "*Chalon*" is given on page 101 as the painter of the portrait of the Queen. It should be E. T. Parris.

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